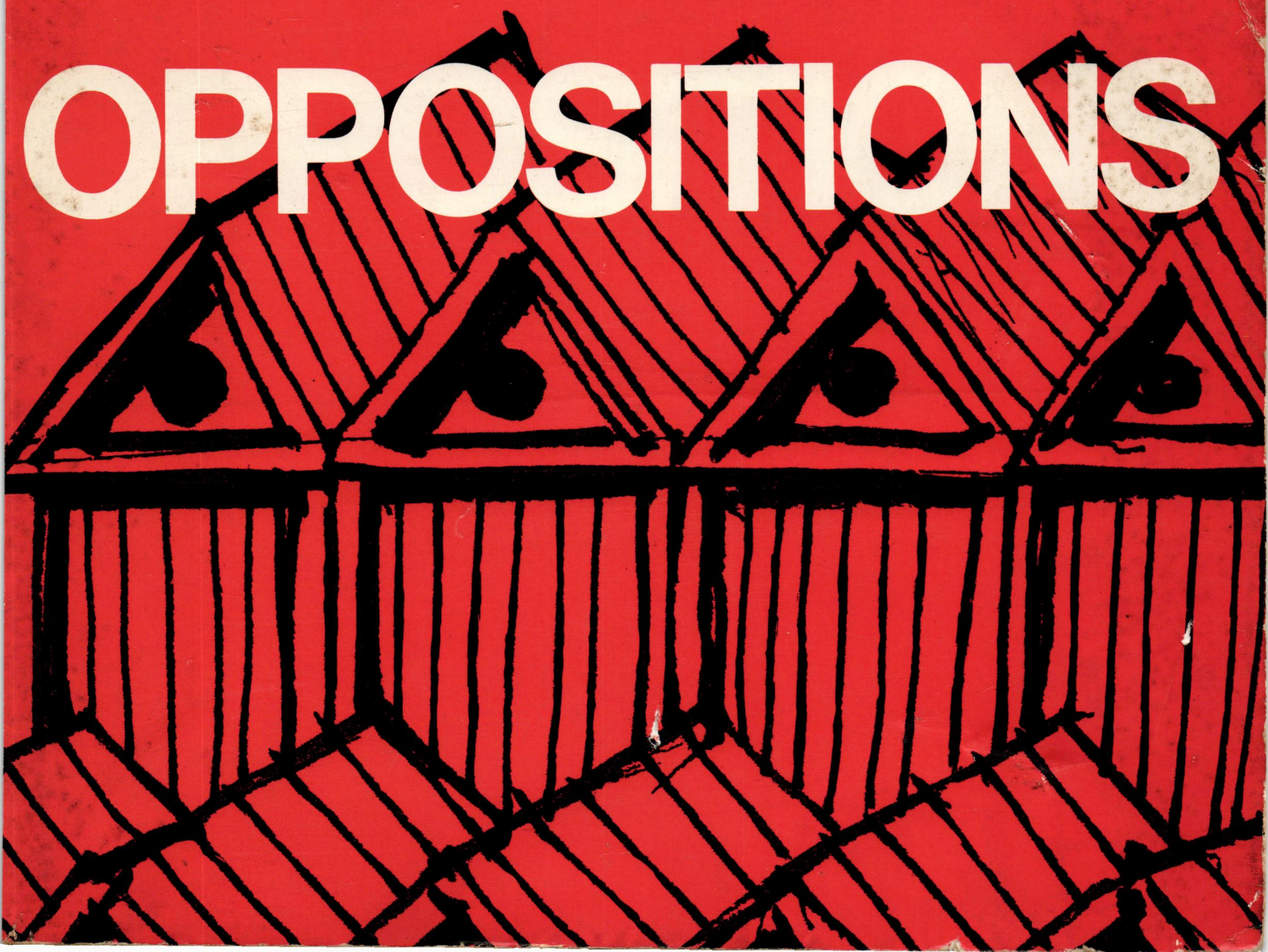
A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

Published for The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies

By Rizzoli, New York

Spring 1984: 26

OPPOSITIONS



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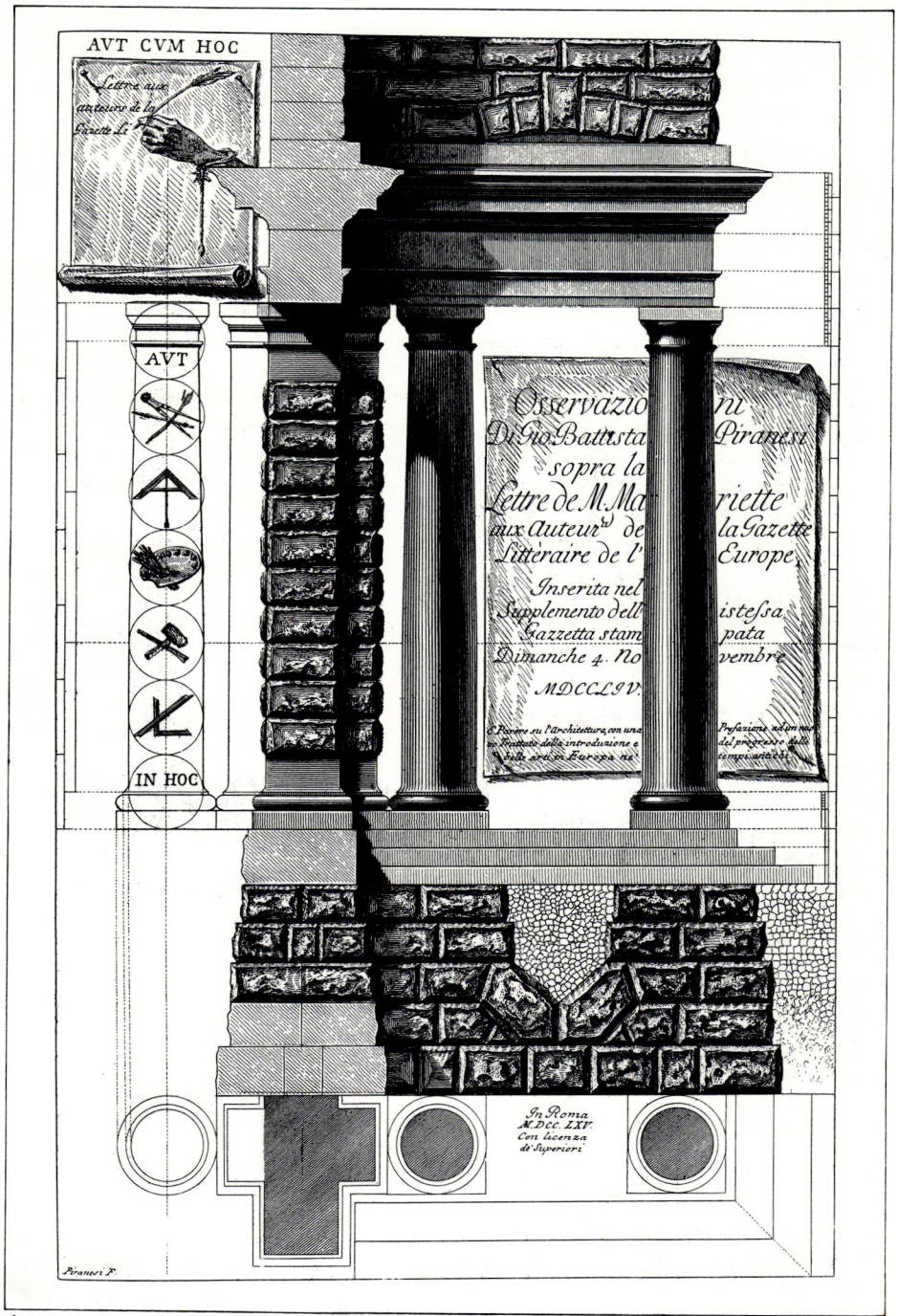

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1 Frontispiece from Osservazioni ... sopra la lettre de M. Mariette, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1765.*

Thoughts on Architecture

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Translation by Michaela Nonis and Mark Epstein
Introduction by Kevin C. Lippert

In the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe* of 4 November 1764, there appears a letter from the French critic, collector, dealer, and artist, Pierre Jean Mariette, roundly criticizing Giovanni Battista Piranesi. In his letter, Mariette seeks to "defend the Greeks against certain attacks directed against them by M. Piranesi. This author, who prefers [Roman architecture], does not seem to me to speak of the Greeks with all the esteem that is their due." Mariette is referring to Piranesi's *Della Magnificenza dell' Architettura dei Romani*, in which he challenges the notion, particularly dear to French theorists such as Laugier, Cordemoy, and Le Roy, of the superiority of Greek over Roman architecture. Piranesi's defense of the degenerate, overly ornamented architecture of the Etruscans confounds Mariette: "There is no composition that is not full of superfluous ornament, and absolutely *hors d'œuvre*. Everything is sacrificed for luxury, and in the end one is left with a style that quickly becomes ridiculous and barbarous."

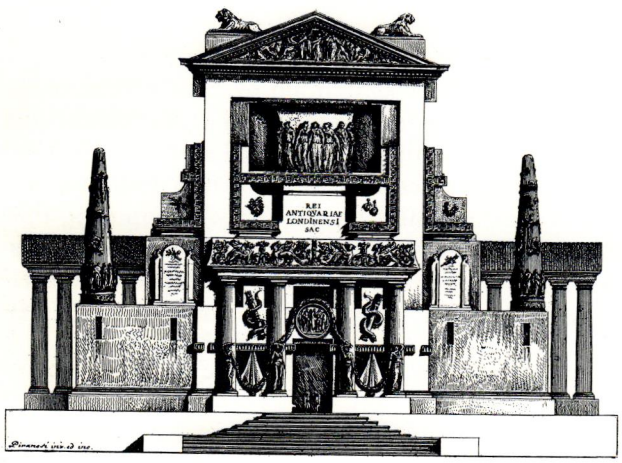
Piranesi's reply — the *Ozzervazioni di Giovanni Battista Piranesi sopra la Lettre de Monsieur Mariette aux Auteurs de la Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe* of 1765 — was quick and biting. This short essay (twenty-three pages and nine plates) is made up of three parts. The first, the *Ozzervazioni*, is a reprint of Mariette's letter with sarcastic annotations. The third, *Della introduzione e del progresso delle belle arti in Europa ne tempi antichi*, is an introduction to a longer essay that was never completed. It is the second essay, the *Parere su l'architettura*, translated here, that provides the clearest exposition of Piranesi's thoughts on ornament and quotation.

The *Parere* is a dialogue between the strawman Protopiro, a rigorist in the tradition of Laugier and Winckelmann, and Didascalo, the voice of Piranesi. Didascalo reduces *ad absurdum* Protopiro's argument in favor of the Vitruvian principles of law, reason, and simplicity, and demonstrates that its logical conclusion is an architecture of monotony, devoid of any artistic originality. Today, when some theorists and practitioners argue in favor of a reductionist architecture based on a rational interpretation of its tectonic origins, and others argue in favor of an architecture rich in ornament and historical association, Piranesi's dialogue is especially appropriate.

Piranesi's treatise is accompanied by nine plates, exaggerated compositions combining Greek, Egyptian, and Etruscan motifs in a highly polemical manner. Here all classical rules are discarded in favor of a free and creative use of the elements of antiquity. Anticipating that critics such as Mariette would find these designs excessive and bizarre, Piranesi inscribes a retort in the attic of the last plate: "They despise my novelty, I their timidity."

Thoughts on Architecture

Giovanni Battista Piranesi



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2, 3 Plates from Parere su l'Architettura.

Protopiro: What, Didascalo! When finally, being well versed in the practice of architecture, you have come to discern the good from the bad, instead of making good use of your knowledge, would you like to be thought of as one of those people who, the more they believe they know something of this art, the less they practice it?

Didascalo: Why do you say this, Protopiro?

Protopiro: What kind of drawings are those that you are beginning to defend? You force me to recall Montesquieu's axiom: "A building laden with ornament is an enigma for the eyes, as a confused poem is an enigma for the mind." This I told Piranesi himself when he showed me those drawings, trying to convince me that they were one of the best things that his hands had accomplished so far.

Didascalo: Goodness gracious! You certainly do not hide your feelings!

Protopiro: Well, I love the truth!

Didascalo: So do I; and since I am more familiar with it, and thus love it even more than you do, I would like to point out to you that Montesquieu knew more about poetry than about architecture. He understood, of course, that a distinguished poet had many expedients available to him and need not confuse the minds of his readers; but he didn't know, as far as ornaments are concerned, how few are the resources of architecture, especially if architects are prevented from dressing it up as best they can with things other than that which strictly pertains to it. And now please tell me; a confused poem has done nothing more than confuse the mind: a building laden with ornaments is something that has been liked through the centuries and is now appreciated more than ever, and I think that buildings were built to satisfy the taste of the public, not that of the critics. Now how can Montesquieu compare a poem that, being confused, has everybody rising up against it, with a building that, being full of ornamentation, has pleased and is pleasing to the majority of men? My

friend, you must be more cautious in adopting new proverbs, because when you analyze them thoroughly, you find that their wisdom is only skin deep. Follow the old saying, "Use creates the rules."

Protopiro: Use, not abuse, creates the rules. Where is he? Where is the wise architect, or admirer of architectural works, who does not condemn the use of those attributes which do not belong to architecture, which you could define only as "things other than those that strictly pertain to it?"

Didascalo: You force me to say what I did not want to say. I do not think you know what you are saying. Answer me, please: On what grounds do you call that which is commonly done in architecture abuse?

Protopiro: You should ask your friend Piranesi; he is the author of those endless declamations one reads in *Della Magnificenza e dell' Architettura dei Romani* against that way of doing things, against adorning buildings with ornaments different from those that are given by the truth; that is to say, by the very nature of architecture.

Didascalo: Answer my question, please. Then you will find that Piranesi is not as inconstant a person as you think. On what grounds, I say, do you define as abuse what is commonly done in architecture?

Protopiro: You force me to say what you know as well as I do. In order to show that what is commonly done in architecture is not really germane to this art, but is an abuse, one should discuss the nature of architecture, and that would be an interminable discussion. But hasn't Piranesi said more than enough on these subjects in his book? However, just so that you will not be able to say that I had nothing to object to in your arguments, I will try to contradict some of Piranesi's theories, which he has deduced from his lengthy examination of the origins of architecture.

Didascalo: Please begin!

Protopiro: I hope that my memory does not fail me, though I think I remember all fairly clearly. In the first place I would like to know why, if a building's walls are pulled up for no other reason than to protect us from the sides and to support what covers our heads, they must exhibit all those decorations: tympana or rustications, as they are called, ashlars, cornices, and many other interruptions. And what is the meaning of the garlands, the grotesque masks, the plates, the stripes, the heads of deer, of oxen, and of all those other encumbrances which one finds around the doors, the windows, the arches, and the other openings in the walls? The festoons, the labyrinths, the arabesques, the hippogriffs, the sphinxes: Why don't they go back to the land of poetry? Why don't the dolphins, the lions, and the other ferocious beasts go back to Libya? Why don't the oval, triangular, and the octagonal columns return to their original round shape? Why doesn't someone straighten the spirals, the twists and the genuflections? The former certainly do not imitate the roundness of the trees from which they originate; the latter reveal a weakness in the structure of the building. The triglyphs should originate from a well-balanced scaffolding, the modillions from the regular placement of the beams in the roof covering. One should put the dentils in their alloted place ...

Didascalo: Both should disappear from the front elevations of factory buildings; they also should not be placed where there are neither beams nor scaffolding. One should not place dentils on the cornice under the frontispiece of a facade, because they don't belong there.

Protopiro: Yes, Sir! Let us bring together the apexes that have been cut in half, and let us pretend no more that a roof can be split in half the long way ...

Didascalo: And that it should rain in the house ...

Protopiro: Let us destroy the epicenes ...

Didascalo: Let us make sure that the volutes and the foliage do not stray from the capitals; then the roofs will seem stronger and the houses will not appear to

 encroach upon each other.

Protopiro: I agree! Let the architects free themselves from the obsession which has made them fall for these extravagances, and everything will be the better for it.

Didascalo: Have you more to say?

Protopiro: I could go on talking for a whole century; however, even if only these things I have mentioned now would get done, a lot would be accomplished, and architecture would be revived and resurrected.

Didascalo: What do you mean by that?

Protopiro: It would be much closer to what it was at the time of its greatest glory.

Didascalo: You mean to say that it would be closer to the architecture the Greeks elevated to perfection, is that right? And whoever doesn't follow your suggestion only shows his ignorance? Therefore Piranesi, who, instead of doing this, has, in his drawings, taken the crazy liberty to work capriciously ...

Protopiro: With no reason for doing so ...

Didascalo: Yes, without a reason. And along with the most ordinary of architects he is also showing his ignorance?

Protopiro: Without a doubt!

Didascalo: My dear Protopiro, with all these maxims floating around in your head, you are likely to send all architects to the pasture!

Protopiro: I don't follow you.

Didascalo: You would like us to go live in those huts from which some people believe the Greeks took the rules for ornamenting architecture.

Protopiro: Didascalo, please do not quibble!

Didascalo: You are the quibbler, you who would like to give architecture rules that it has never had. What will you say if I prove to you that severity, reason, and the imitation of huts are incompatible with architecture? That architecture, instead of using ornaments that derive from those parts which are necessary for the structure of the building, should be ornamented with things totally unrelated to it?

Protopiro: You have quite a task in front of you!

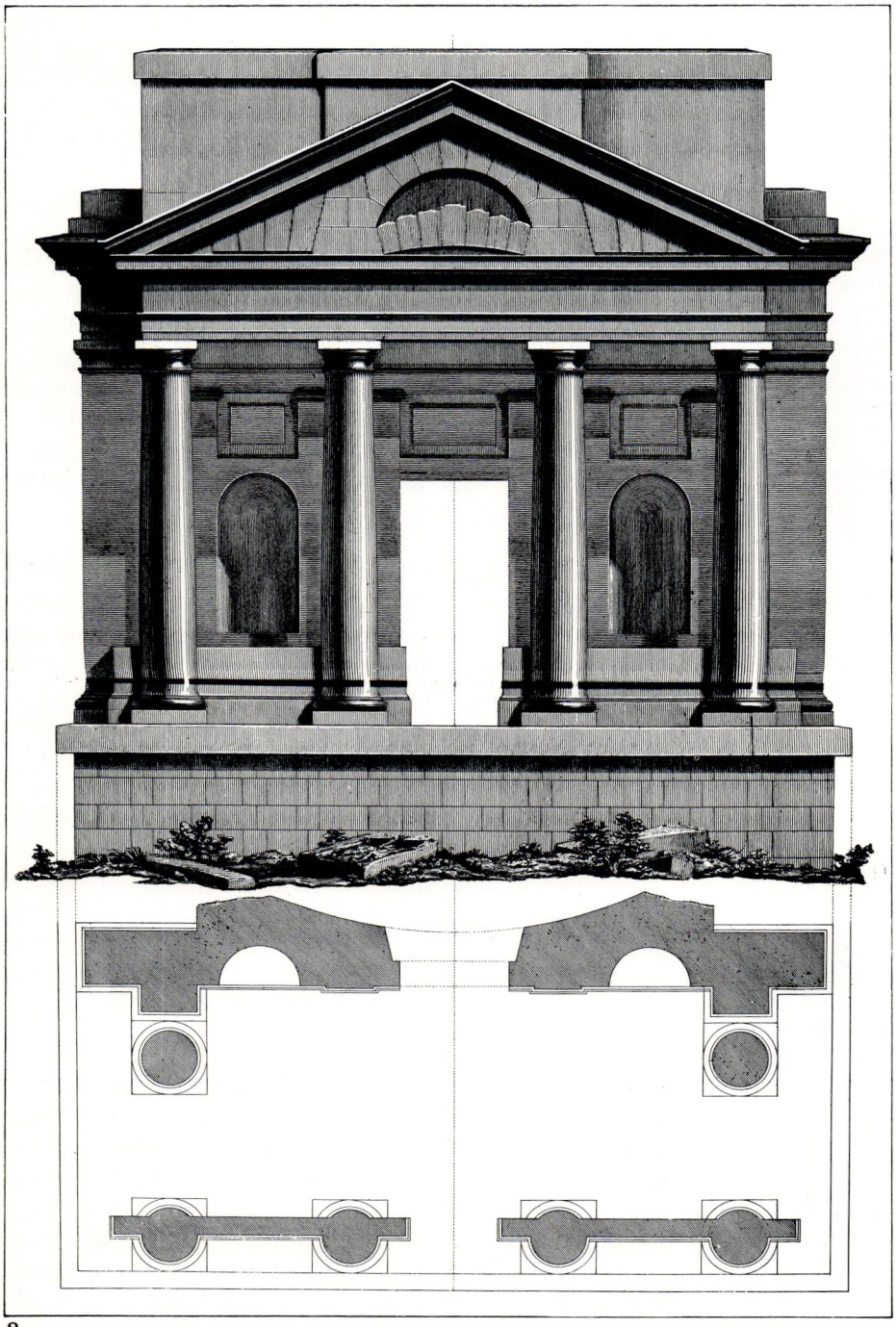
Didascalo: Before giving you a proof of what I am saying I would like to know: Just in what do you think that severity, reason, and imitation lie? I suppose in the style that Vitruvius left us and that Palladio, among other architects, was the first to revive. But on the contrary, you might think it lies in the styles that have recently come from Greece, and which have been presented to us with more pomp than they themselves exhibit.

Protopiro: In either of those styles, provided that it doesn't show the errors and licenses which some architects who revived it thought it opportune to add.

Didascalo: You can have all the reservations you want: the more you have, the easier it will be for me to find proofs in order to convince you; the fewer you have the easier it will be for you to admit that rules should not be a hindrance nor an obstacle to whomever is working.

Protopiro: You know my opinion.

Didascalo: Well then, Greece or Vitruvius? Tell me, please, what are columns supposed to represent? According to Vitruvius, they originate from the forked sticks placed at the corner of the huts; according to others, they are the trunks that support the roof. And what is the meaning of the flutes? Vitruvius thinks that they represent the pleats in the robes of Roman matrons. This means that the columns do not imitate forked sticks or trees but rather women supporting a



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4 Plate from Della Introduzione del Progresso delle Belle Arti in Europa.
5 Plate from Osservazioni.

4

5

roof. What do you think of the flutes? I think columns should be smooth; please remember this: *smooth columns*. The forked sticks and the trees are planted firmly in the ground, which makes them stable and straight. This is exactly the way in which the Dorians fancied their columns. Consequently, they should be made without bases. Remember this: *without bases*. The top of the trees, should they be used for supporting the roof, should be flat and smooth; the top of a forked stick certainly does not resemble a capital; if this is insufficient, you should remember that capitals are supposed to represent something very sturdy, not the heads of men, of virgins, of matrons, nor baskets with leaves around them, nor matrons' wigs put around a basket. Let us also add: *without capitals*. Do not fear, there are many other purists who would like to see smooth columns without bases, and without capitals.

The architraves can imitate, according to your preference, either tree trunks put crosswise on top of forked sticks, or beams laid across smooth tree tops. Now why do bands and a border protrude from the surface of the architraves? Are they there to absorb the water and rot the wood? Please remember this: *architraves without bands or borders*.

What are triglyphs? Vitruvius maintains that they are the extremities of the attic stringers. But, when they are placed at the corners of a building, they contradict this opinion and also fail to be equidistant, since they have to fall at the center of each column. Even if they are not placed at the corners, one will be able to place them at an equal distance from each other only by narrowing or widening the building. Now it is out of the question that some small incisions on cement or stone should dictate the proportions of a building. The ancient architects about whom Vitruvius talks thought that temples shouldn't be built in the Doric style, and the Romans went even further by building temples in this style leaving out all the unnecessary encumbrances. Please remember, Mr. Protopiro: *friezes without triglyphs*. But now it is your turn, Protopiro, to divest architecture of all those ornaments that you were

Protopiro: You will have to prove to me that this is and was indeed their aim.

Didascalo: You are the one who must look for a proof of what you are saying! It is foolish to want to teach what one doesn't know. However, since you affirm that what you would like to see in architecture has not been effectively looked for, let me remind you of the numerous competitions that have been established precisely for this purpose. The latter have been made even more inviting by the addition of royal prizes. But what have the competitors produced? Nothing. They have abandoned the enterprise and refused the prize because their task is an impossible one. What have those people who have recently overrun Asia, Egypt, and Greece produced? Have they found what they were looking for? They say yes to whomever goes to see their work. But what does their work mean to the person who sees it? He goes to see the ruins and brings back the measurements of a column, a frieze, or a cornice, with the intention of giving to architecture proportions different from those we have used until now; he hopes that this will be liked as much as a new order, as a new style of architecture which he has not been able to find. Whether experienced or a novice in these matters, he has not yet understood that there is no building, among the ancient ones, whose proportions are the same as another's, and there are also no old buildings which have the same columns, intercolumniations, arches, etc. He does not want to understand that one order, be it Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, or composite, with all its different measurements and ornaments, is hard to distinguish from another. He doesn't realize that there is only one order, or better, that there is only one style of architecture, which we follow. When I think of this I cannot but laugh at the faults which recently the French *Gazette littéraire* found in the design of a building, built in London by Mr. Adams, one of the most discerning architects of our time. But I have the *Gazette* in my pocket, wait a minute ... please listen:

Mr. Adams distinguishes himself by the grandeur of his ideas as well as by the manner in which he renders them. *This artist exhibited, a short while ago, a drawing which has drawn forth praise from all the connoisseurs. This drawing illustrates a marvelous building which would be fit for the London Parliament or the Academies of Science and Letters. This great design, whose execution would be worthy of a great nation, is particularly remarkable for the gravity which reigns in all its parts; it is an imitation of the best Greek, Egyptian, and Latin styles. The intelligence and the order with which the main traits of the History of England have been put in the bas-relief, with which Mr. Adams has adorned various parts of the building, are truly remarkable.*

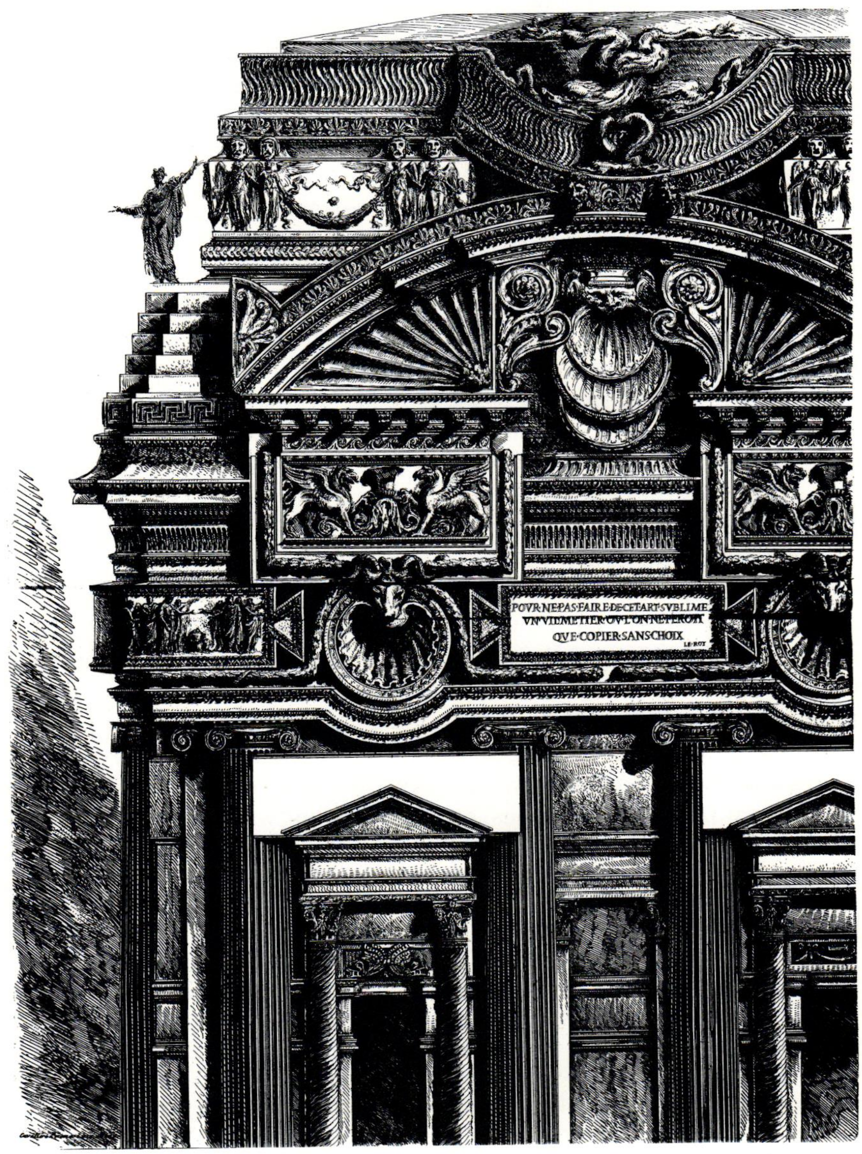
Protopiro: And what have you to say about all this?

Didascalo: Nothing. But please listen to the thoughts of this critic, after he has lavished such a wonderful praise on Mr. Adams:

Nonetheless, one must not think that this drawing presents to us a new order of architecture, as a few people, who have given it the name of 'British Order,' have fancied. A new order is not created just by introducing new ornaments in the capitals and in the other parts of the building. If one considers carefully the orders that are composed in the Corinthian manner, one finds that the ornamentation of the smaller parts varies so much from one to the other that one can easily say that there are as many orders as there are monuments; whereas when one examines the orders only in their principal proportions, one finds that they are quite uniform.

Now, what do you have to say? The critic has praised Mr. Adams again and again, but has made us understand that the drawing should have illustrated a new order, if it wanted to be really extraordinary.

Protopiro: Have pity on me! You attribute to the critic that very fault of which he is accusing those people who want to call Mr. Adams' design the 'British Order.'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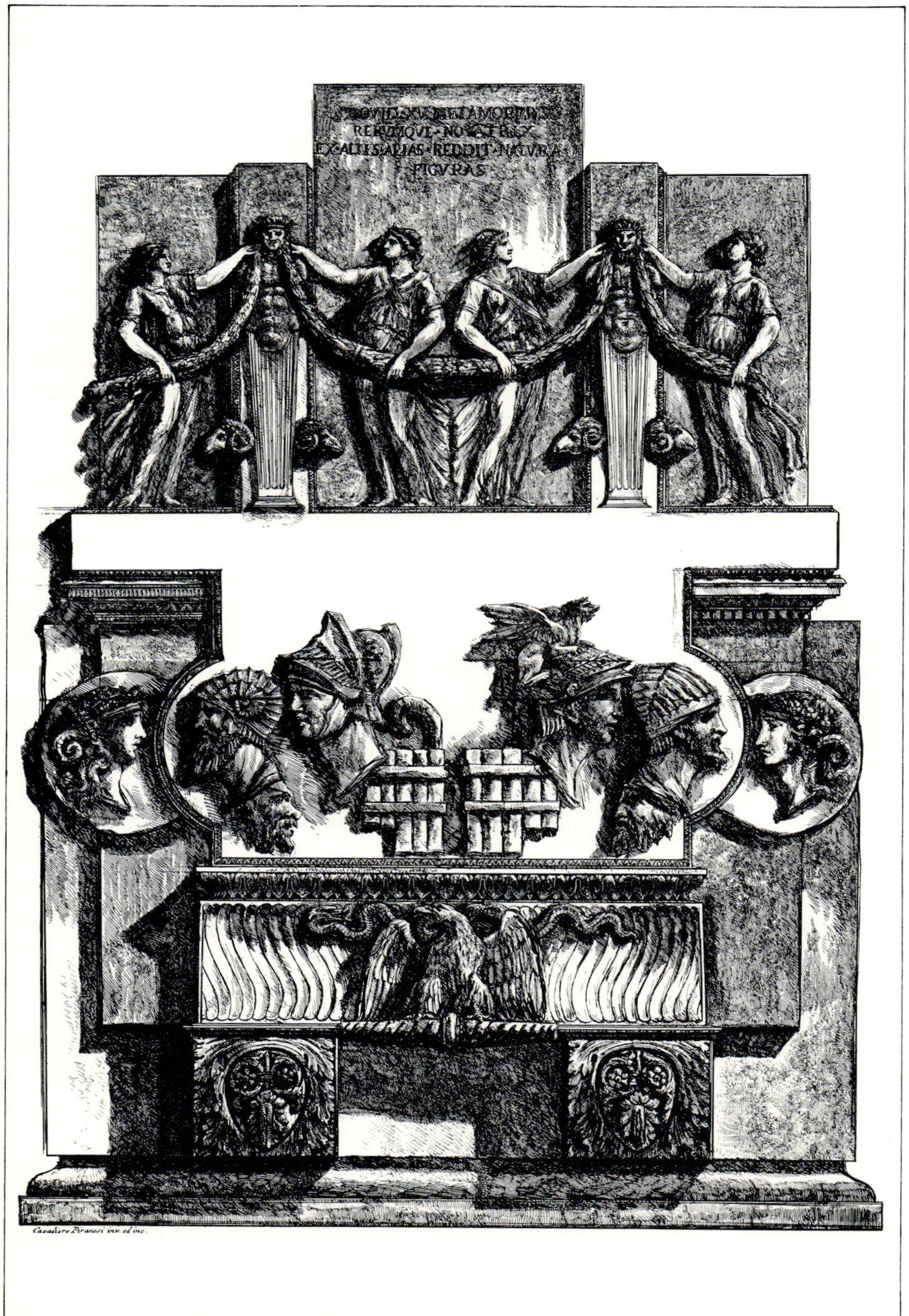
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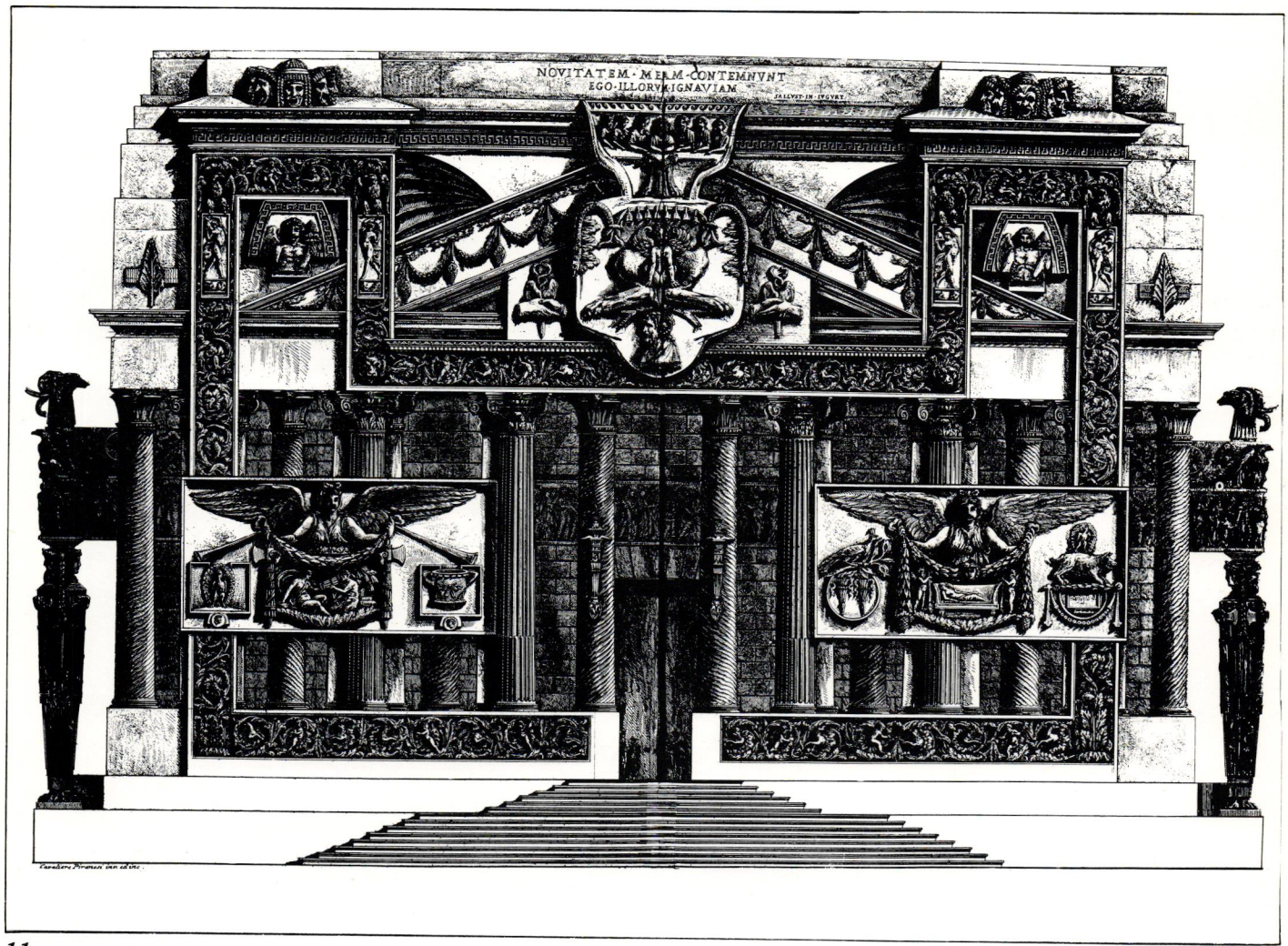
18 **Didascalo:** Do I attribute to the critic those very faults for which he is reproaching others? In this case I would be doing him an injustice only if he thought, as those other people do, that to invent a new order is an impossible thing; but he, along with many others, believes exactly the contrary: Doesn't he say "When we examine the principal proportions" of the so-called British Order, "we find that they are nearly all uniform?" Isn't this as if he said that to invent a new order one has to create proportions which differ from those of all the other orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian? Now these new proportions may very well be invented and that means that a new order may very well be created. This is the critic's opinion. Do you agree? But look at how odd he is! He states:

One does not create a new order just by introducing new ornaments in the capitals and in the other parts of the building, and if one considers carefully the orders which are composed in the Corinthian manner, one finds that the ornamentation of the smaller parts varies so much from one to the other, that one can easily say that there are as many orders as there are monuments ...

But I would like to ask the critic (here is what I find laughable about all this business) if he believes that the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian are really different orders. Does he believe that there are three different styles of architecture? He will say yes, of course. Now I will pretend to go back to that time in which the three orders were invented: the Doric first, the Ionic and the Corinthian later. Using the critic's words, I will say to the men who invented the two later styles: "Do not pride yourselves in having created a new order just because you have introduced new ornaments in the capitals and in the other parts of the building. My dear Sirs, the same elements that appear in the Doric are still there, the same architraves, columns, friezes, and cornices. And if one looks attentively at every temple built with the Doric order, one finds that the ornamentation of the smaller parts varies so much from one to the other, that one can easily say that there are as many orders as there are monuments." What would the inventors of the Ionic and Corinthian orders answer? They would, for their own part, repeat the critic's words and say: "If one examines the principal proportions of our orders, one finds that they differ quite a bit from those of the Doric order"; and they would be sure to have dispelled all my doubts. But I, using the critic's words once again, would add something which, strangely enough, would contradict both them and the critic: "If one looks attentively at the Doric order in all the temples of Greece, Asia, and Italy, one finds that its principal proportions vary so much from one to the other that one can easily establish as many orders as there are temples; the proof of all this is in the examples that Mr. Le Roy and Mr. Steward have gathered in their *Recueil*."

So, to go back to what I was saying, my dear Protopiro, one and only one is the style of architecture that we follow. How much longer will we refrain from admitting that to vary the ornament is not the same thing as creating a new order? A better way to put this would be to say that there are really three styles that we follow in architecture (style or order, as you please): one composed by columns, one by pilasters, and one composed by the continuous wall. It is truly crazy to think that different proportions will produce a new kind of architecture! Even the large proportions would get lost in the whole, and it already happens that we cannot distinguish the difference in the measurements of ancient and modern buildings. Furthermore, why look for other proportions? It is sufficient that the frieze not fall under the weight of the cornice, the architrave under the weight of the frieze and the cornice, the column under the weight of all three combined. These are the proportions of architecture - they have all been discovered! Whether these proportions vary, whether they increase or diminish in size so as not to jeopardize the solidity of the building, is of little importance. Consequently, since the intention is to make a building stand up, there will not be many different ornaments to confuse the beholder, only those that derive from that intention.

So, my dear Protopiro, since there is no way to create new orders, and since the difference in the proportions



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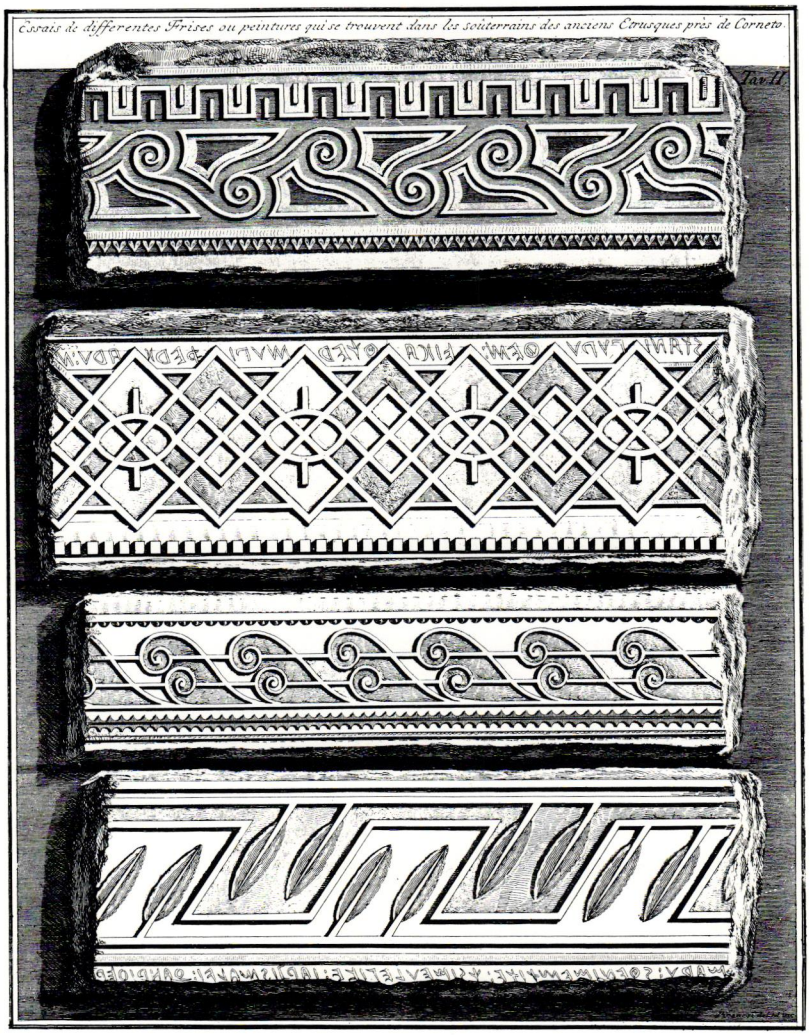
20 *12-15 Plates from* Della Introduzione.



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does not contribute to make any appreciable difference in the appearance of a building, how can one abolish what has become the common procedure for architects without becoming monotonous?

But let us suppose the impossible: let us suppose that the world, though weary of all that does not vary day by day, would be kind enough to put up with your monotony. What would architecture be reduced to then? "To a vile trade where all would be imitation," as a certain gentleman has already pointed out; you and your kind would be reduced to being very ordinary, undistinguished architects, little better than bricklayers. They, at least, by doing the same thing over and over again, learn their trade by heart and have also the advantage of doing it mechanically, without effort. The architectural trade would cease to exist because whoever will want to build will not make the mistake of asking an architect to do what a bricklayer would do for less.

Protopiro: Yes, this could happen if architecture consisted only in what is ancient and imposing.

Didascalo: Do not even mention the rest. You know better than I do that bricklayers are as competent as architects for all that concerns the solidity of a building — foundations, materials, the thickness of the walls, the width of the arches; if this also were taken into account, the works of architecture would be quite simple and in keeping with tradition.

Protopiro: Do these 'experts' have any knowledge of the proper sites and of the proper way to place this or that building? Are they aware of all the details that have to be considered in the destination and usage of a building, dictated by economy, excellence, and inclination?

Didascalo: As far as that is concerned, you should remember that what is being done today has always been done. Architects are called only when somebody wants to build a beautiful building; this is all architecture consists of today. But when there is no concern for the exterior or the onlooker, the builder becomes the architect, and all he needs is somebody who will build the walls. All the other aspects of architecture, apart from ornament, are so unimportant and provide so little fame to the architects involved that very few consider these aspects as having anything to do with their profession.

Protopiro: And you think of these people as architects? Do you also think that the builders should be praised for what they do?

Didascalo: On this subject I will only add that most people have grown accustomed to buildings designed by builders or bricklayers, or architects of this kind; and the people who live in these buildings, instead of being pitied for their inadequate lodgings, are often reproved for the luxury they live in. But let's get back to our topic: When you take away the freedom to vary the ornamentation according to one's talent, you open up the sanctuary of architecture, and architecture, now public domain, will be despised by everyone! In time, the buildings will be built carelessly, those methods that you think are so reasonable will be lost no matter what you now do to uphold them. You will lose the possibility and the desire to criticize, along with the unique position which you now share with other architects: this would be, in your eyes, the greatest of all calamities. I pray you to keep considering your so-called reason in trying to remedy the current confusion, without, however, ceasing to respect the liberty to operate as one pleases.

Please do not think though that by defending this liberty I am also saying that all buildings, no matter how they are ornamented, should be considered appropriate and beautiful. Here is what I think, as far as ornament is concerned. Tell me, how does it happen that something which we have thought beautiful in our imagination appears to us as displeasing once we see it in reality? Why has nobody ever condemned the poets for having imagined buildings with ornaments much stranger and unreasonable than those used by architects? Montesquieu finds fault with a building laden

with ornaments, but never criticizes a poem in which exactly such a building is described. Let us see if we can find out why this is so. Could it be that ideas cannot make us see what our eye immediately detects? Here is my opinion: The poet makes us observe one ornament after the other, never letting us see the whole picture. For example, it is pleasing to us when the poet talks of Cupid's feet, of Adonis' legs, Venus' countenance, Apollo's arms, Hercules' thorax, a giant's nose, and many other things. But if you put all these different parts and characteristics of all these statues together, what will be the result? A ridiculous statue, a monster which will repulse you. These are the kinds of methods that I disapprove of in architecture.

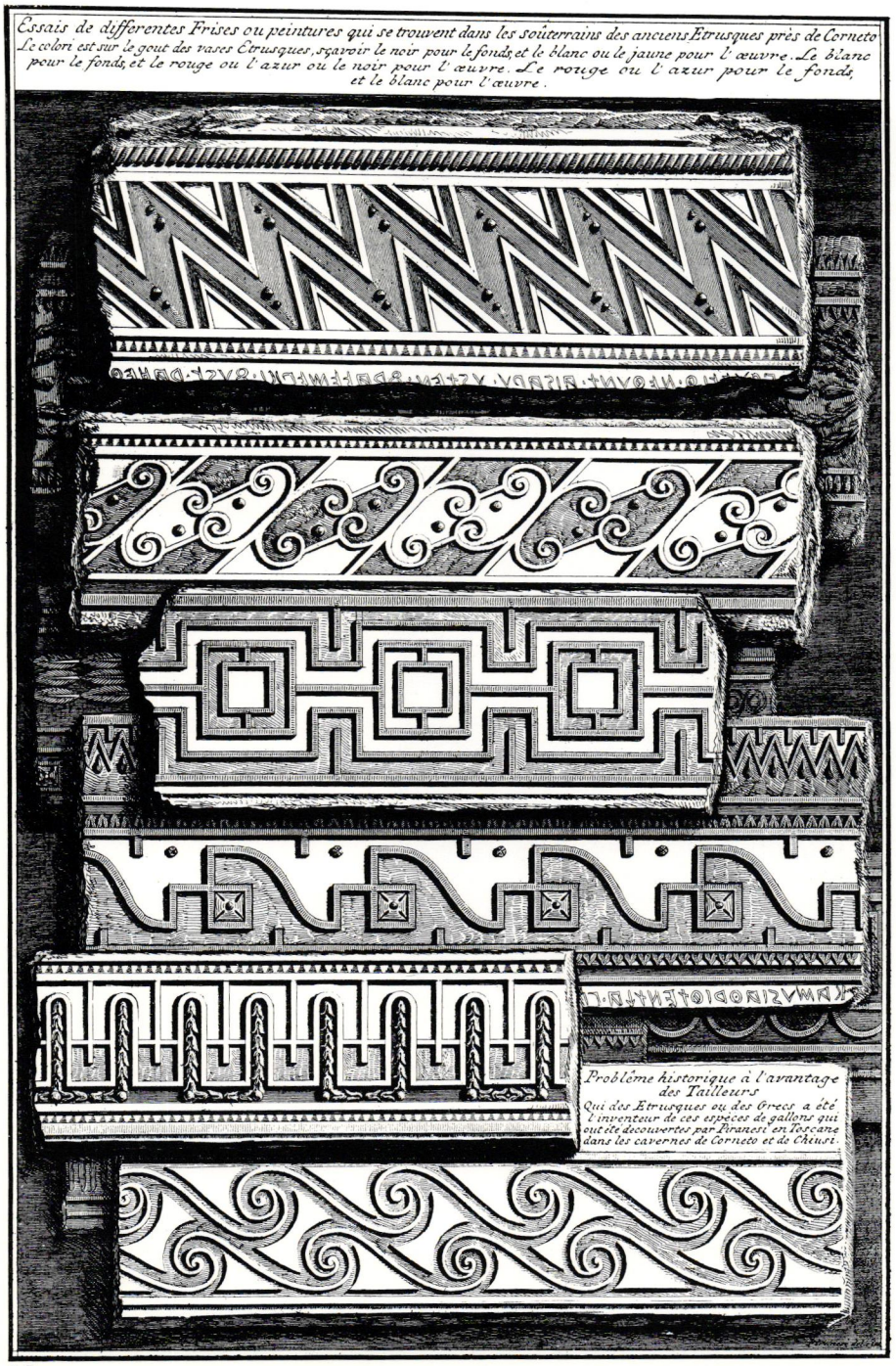
One sees almost everywhere parts that are valuable in and of themselves, but insufferable when they are carelessly put together. The harmony of the whole is put in jeopardy by the part, what is heavy is harmed by what is light, what is imposing is vitiated by what is small and petty. Now, in order that so many parts that we find beautiful in themselves remain that way when they are put together, so that our pleasure in them will not be spoiled by their incompatibility, let us give a majestic and imposing character to what is mean and petty. The statues, for example, since we have mentioned them above, which we find in the temples in so many different poses, make us think of those people who desecrate this hallowed place with their unseemly behavior; however, when statues are put upright and are made to assume modest poses, they become one of the most pleasing of all ornaments.

That is not enough, you will say; the niches in the temple are much more pleasing without than with statues. But how can a niche without a statue truly please us, since the niche was invented not because it is beautiful in itself but in order to shelter a statue? Our eyes, you will answer, are not capable of experiencing pleasure when too many objects confront them at the same time; they find pleasure in the empty niche, and in the statue only when the statue is all they see. Montesquieu had a reason to say that "a building laden with ornaments is an enigma for the eyes, as a confused poem is an enigma for the mind."

The purists follow Montesquieu's reasoning; but does an opinion have the right to prevail upon another if, when placed on the scales, they weigh exactly the same? Here is the opposing conviction: The purists affirm that the niches are more beautiful if they are not encumbered with statues. The reason is that the eyes cannot find pleasure in a multitude of things which they see at the same time. But I repeat once again: For what strange reason are these niches not pleasing when filled, if they were made for the statues? For the same reason for which the doors and windows of a home, proportionate to the stature and made for the comfort of human beings, would not be appropriate for giants. It is not the statue in itself which is unfit, but rather the size of the statue compared to that of the niche, that makes it incompatible with architecture. The encumbrance of the statues, their unseemly poses, the disproportion between them and the niches, the bases, etc., all take away from the temple every reason we might have for praising it.

Now please tell me which of these two opinions carries more weight, mine or the purists? They are both true, you will answer, and I agree; is there then a way in which they can be reconciled? A way in which a building laden with ornaments will cease to be an enigma for one's eyes?

In Rome there are two columns, that of Trajan and that of Marcus Aurelius, that are built exactly the same way. Yet, if you look at the column of Marcus Aurelius, you will take it for an example of Montesquieu's axiom: the rugged and coarse bas-reliefs which cover it from top to bottom are ornaments — you will say — that destroy a column rather than adorn it. But do you feel the same way after having seen the Trajan Column, it, too, covered with bas-reliefs from top to bottom, even on the pedestal? Have these ornaments offended your sight? The fact that they scarcely protrude from the building, that they are visible yet inconspicuous, has reconciled both our ways of thinking. The architecture of the


Essais de differentes Frises ou peintures qui se trouvent dans les souterrains des anciens Etrusques près de Corneto
Le colori est sur le gout des vases Etrusques, sçavoir le noir pour le fonds, et le blanc ou le jaune pour l'œuvre. Le blanc pour le fonds, et le rouge ou l'azur ou le noir pour l'œuvre. Le rouge ou l'azur pour le fonds, et le blanc pour l'œuvre.
Problême historique à l'avantage des Tailleurs
Qui des Etrusques ou des Grecs a été l'inventeur de ces espéces de gallons qui ont été découvertes par Piranesi en Toscane dans les cavernes de Corneto et de Chiusi.

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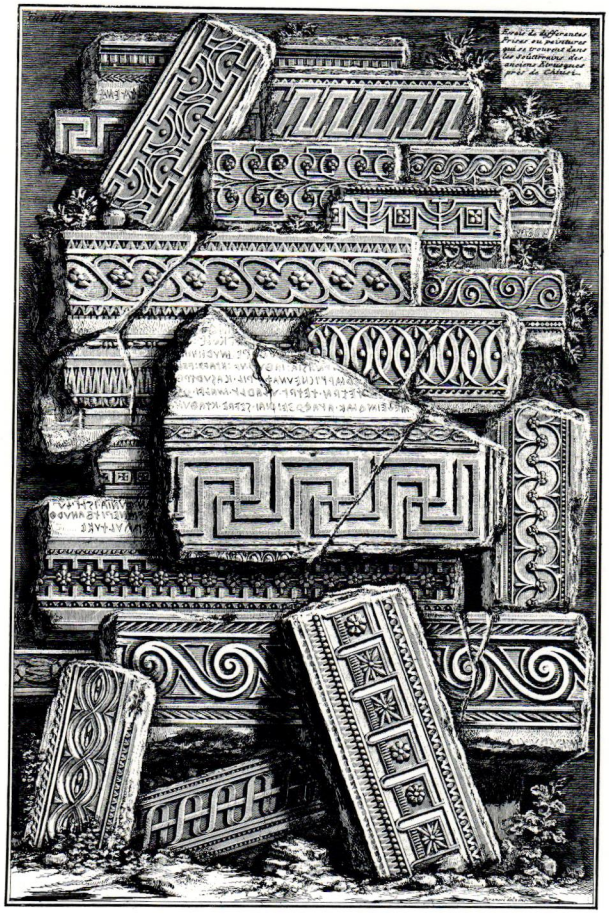

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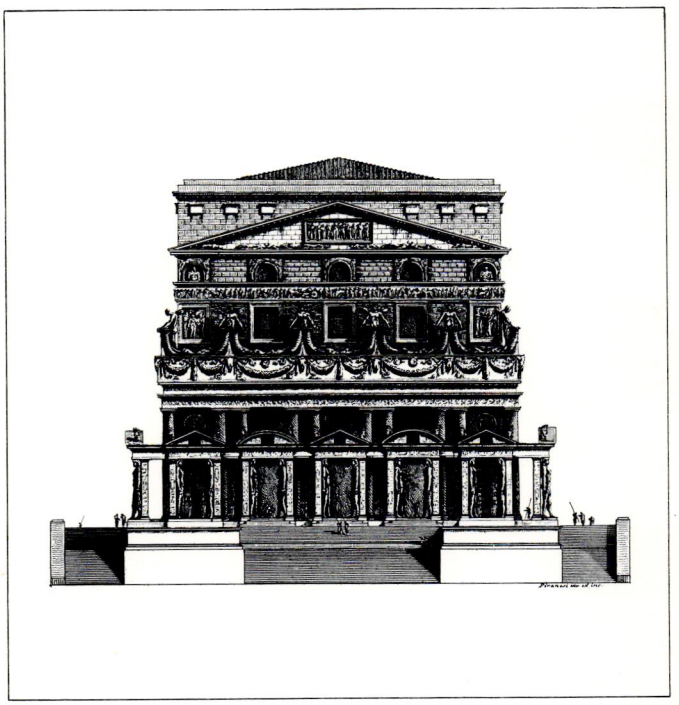
column, the clearly defined members which compose it, is not altered in the least by the superimposition of a profusion of ornaments.

Somebody — you will say — will want to adorn a building with obtrusive ornaments. He must then distinguish between the principal ornament and those which surround it; he must not present to the beholder a multitude of different objects, every one of which has been put there to be the most important figure. He must establish among ornaments something which we often see in nature, a hierarchy, a system of ranking, from the most to the least imposing, and only then will the eyes perceive a pleasant and pleasurable disposition of things rather than an irritating confusion. And, in truth, if these and other ornaments which are used in architecture are beautiful in their own right, and if the architecture itself is beautiful, why would we want to give the eye only one pleasure, which is to let it admire only the architecture? Why not give the observer the double pleasure of showing him an architecture covered by ornament, once we have discovered the way to make the one harmonize with the other?



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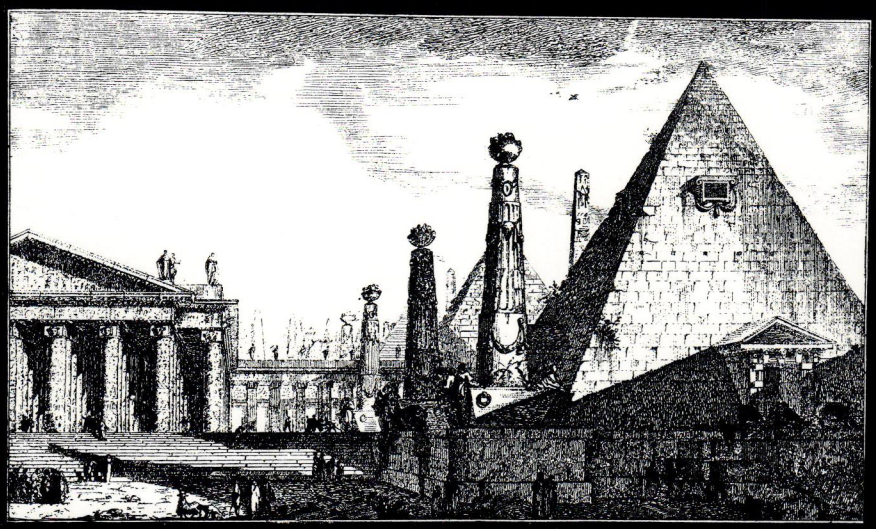
In the meantime, we have achieved here a partial harmonization of the parts with the whole, which, in my judgment, one must try to achieve not only with these particular attributes of architecture but also with all those ornaments that one will want to use. Piranesi, with his drawings which have given rise to our dispute, has wanted to enlighten us with an example, being well aware that to do it with words would be nearly impossible. The reason for this is that, if architects have to be absolutely free to operate as they wish, it would take us an eternity to talk about those rules which, in their freedom, they are nonetheless bound to follow. Whether Piranesi has, in his work, conformed to his own and to my way of thinking, must be judged by him and will be judged by the public. Goodbye, my dear Protopiro. I hope that you will remain of your opinion, because it would be frivolous of you to declare yourself convinced of the contrary by a madman like me!



Three Kinds of Historicism

Alan Colquhoun

1 Frontispiece from J.F. Blondel, L'architecture française.

The title of this essay is simply the starting point for an attempt to clarify the confusion that surrounds the word *historicism* in modern architectural criticism, and through this to throw some light on the present situation in architecture, in which a new consciousness of history has replaced the anti-historical bias of the modern movement.

Dictionary definitions (and general usage) suggest that there are three interpretations of *historicism*: 1. The theory that all socio-cultural phenomena are historically determined and that all truths are relative. 2. A concern for the institutions and traditions of the past. 3. The use of historical forms. The word *historicism* therefore can be applied to three quite separate objects: the first is a theory of history; the second, an attitude; the third, an artistic practice. There is no guarantee that the three have anything in common. I will investigate them to see how, if at all, they *are* related, and then to see what light they throw on the phenomenon which is sometimes referred to as the *neo-avant-garde*.

The idea that values change and develop with historical time is by now so ingrained in common wisdom that it is difficult to imagine a different point of view. Yet the idea is, historically speaking, of fairly recent origin. It began to take shape in Europe as a whole in the seventeenth century, but was not given a consistent philosophical or historiographic formulation until the rise of the romantic movement in Germany, in the late eighteenth century. The word *historicist*, as it applies to our first definition, comes from the German word *historismus*. It used to be translated as *historism*, but, probably under the influence of Benedetto Croce, was changed to *historicism* — from the Italian *storicismo* — in the early years of this century.

In the German movement, historicism was connected with idealism and Neoplatonism. But the Idea had connotations different from those associated with the classical thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to classical thought, cultural values

derived from natural law. Indeed, the value of history for historians like Hume and Montesquieu was that it provided evidence of the existence of natural law. It was necessary, when studying history, to strip away the inessential and accidental, and expose the essential and universal. Through the study of history one learned that "human nature was always and everywhere the same." It followed from this that that which was of value in the cultural products of this human nature — art and architecture, for example — was equally fixed. Architecture, no less than painting, was an imitation of Nature through the intuition of her underlying laws. History, as the story of the contingent, merely had the effect of obscuring these laws. It is true that the rise of empirical science in the seventeenth century led certain theorists to question the immutable laws of architecture enshrined in the writings of Vitruvius (for instance, Claude Perrault went so far as to say that the rules of proportion and the orders owed their authority to custom); but this was not a universally held view. The majority of architects and theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still held the view that good architecture obeyed immutable natural laws. Even Laugier, writing at a time when the notion of taste had already undermined the classical certainties, claimed that Perrault was prompted by the spirit of contrariness, and that the rules of architecture could be deduced from a few self-evident axioms based on our observation of nature. The best architecture was that which was close to nature, and that which was closest to nature could be found in the building of the ancients — though sometimes even they had been mistaken, in which case archaeology had to be supplemented with reason.

The idealism of the neoclassical view of architecture was therefore absolutist and depended on a combination of authority, natural law, and reason. Although in many ways neoclassicism differed from the Renaissance, the two held that the values of architecture referred to fixed laws, exemplified in Greco-Roman buildings.

The historicist view disputed the epistomology on which this view of architecture depended, and gave an entirely different interpretation of the Ideal. According to historicism, the classical conception of a fixed and immutable ideal was, in fact, a false realism; and it tried to apply to the works of man the same objective standards that it applied to the natural world as a whole. But man belonged to a different category from that of inorganic or organic nature. Man and his institutions could only be studied in relation to the context of their historical development. The individual, and the social institutions he constructed, were governed by a vital, genetic principle, not by laws fixed and eternal. Human reason was not a faithful reflection of abstract truths; it was the rationalization of social customs and institutions, which had evolved slowly, and which varied from place to place and from one time to another. The ideal was therefore an aim that emerged from historical experience and contingency. Although it might have been necessary to postulate an ideal that would be ultimately the same for all cultures, it could not be rationally grasped. We could only give it the names that belonged to the values of a local culture at its particular stage of development. Every culture therefore contained a mixture of truth and falsehood when measured against the ideal; equally, each culture could only adhere to its own notion of the true and the false, through values that were imminent in particular social and institutional forms.

In this view, society and its institutions are analogous to the individual. The individual can only be defined in terms unique to himself. Though he may be motivated by what he and his society see as objective norms of belief and conduct, his own essence cannot be reduced to these norms; it is constituted by the contingent factors of his birth, and is subject to a unique development. The value of his life cannot be defined in a way that excludes his individuality. It is the same with societies, cultures, and states: they develop according to organic laws which they have internalized in their structures. In them, truth cannot be separated from destiny.

Based on a new notion of history, this view found its chief expression in the field of historiography. The aim of the historian became to research into the past of a

particular society for its own sake, not in order to confirm *a priori* principles and provide exemplars, as had been the case with the English and French historians of the eighteenth century. This project was undertaken in the German-speaking countries in reaction against the French rationalism which had dominated European thought for two centuries, and it coincided with the rise of German national consciousness. In the work of Leopold von Ranke, the first great historian of this school, the writing of history is characterized by two equally important tendencies: 1. The objective and exhaustive examination of facts. 2. The attempt to penetrate the essential spirit of the country or period being studied. The dialectic between these two aims (which one might call the positivist and the idealist) had already been stated clearly by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his famous essay, "On the Historian's Task," of 1821. According to von Humboldt, the events of history are given purpose and structure by a hidden spirit or idea, just as the idea or form is hidden in the infinitely variable forms of the visible world. It is the historian's task to reveal the idea beneath the empirical surface of historical events, just as it is the artist's task to reveal the ideal beneath the accidental appearance of bodies. At the same time, the idea can only become apparent through the detailed study of these events. Any imposition on history of an *a priori* purpose will inevitably distort reality, and it is this *reality* that is the object of historical study.

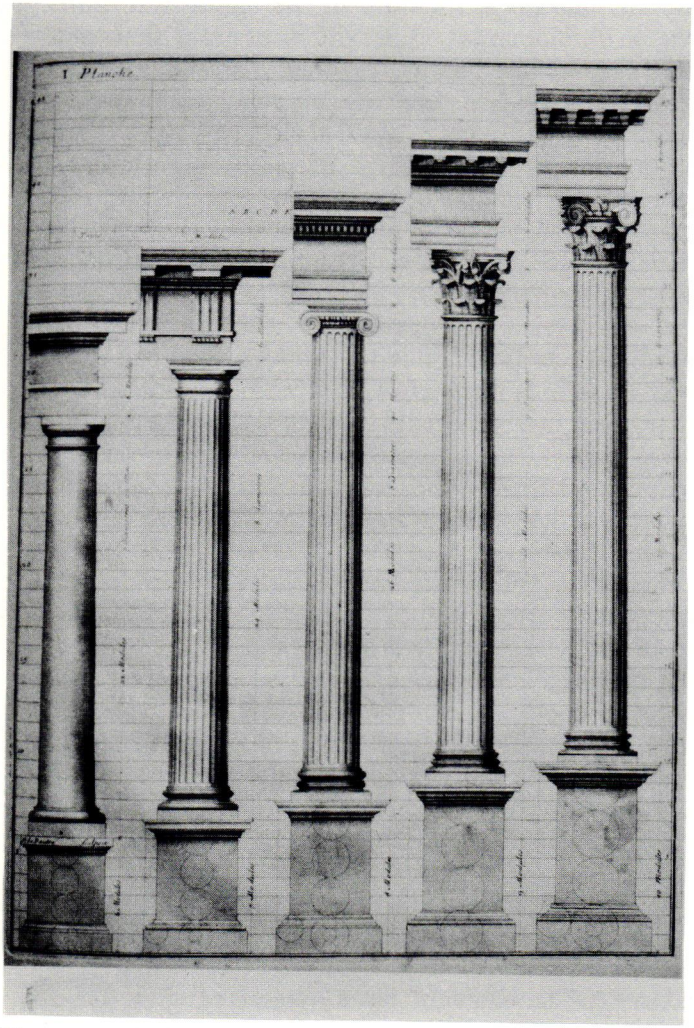
An ideal that emerges from particular historical events entails a relativizing of cultures, since aspects of the ideal to be revealed will differ from case to case, and this relativizing of the historical view is obviously connected in some way with eclecticism in the practice of art and architecture. Yet eclecticism did not, in itself, result necessarily in a doctrine of relativism. It was the product of an interest in history which developed in the early eighteenth century — a phenomenon of the history of taste before it became connected with German historical theory. Indeed, *returning* to an architecture based on nature — a notion so contradictory to the spirit of historicism — was itself one of the products of this new interest in, and attitude toward, history.

The attitude toward history in the eighteenth century was, in fundamental ways, different from that of the Renaissance. The Renaissance had a strong faith in its contemporary world. In returning to classical modes, it picked up the threads of a world that was more modern than recent medieval culture. In the eighteenth century the return to classicism was always accompanied by elements of poetic reverie, nostalgia, and a feeling of irretrievable loss. Within the context of the type of historical consciousness, eclecticism took two forms which at first might seem incompatible. On the one hand, different styles could exist side by side, as when one finds a classical temple next to a Gothic ruin at Stowe. On the other hand, one style could come to stand for a dominant moral idea and be connected with an idea of social reform. This happens, for example, in the second half of the eighteenth century in France, when the desire to reform society initiates a return to austere classical forms, as one finds in the architecture of Ledoux or the paintings of David. What is common to both forms of eclecticism is a strong feeling for the past, an awareness of the passage of historical time, and the ability of past styles to suggest certain poetic or moral ideas. The same motif can be the expression of private taste and the symbol of public morality. Robert Rosenblum[1] gives the example of the Doric temple front forming the entrance to a cave, which was a folly in the garden of the banker Claude Bernard St. James before it became an emblem of Revolution in a pagent at Lyon some years later.

Eclecticism depends on the power of historical styles to become the emblems of ideas associated with the cultures that produced them. No doubt this relationship first made itself felt in the Renaissance, but by the late eighteenth century, historical knowledge had vastly extended its range of cultural models. An interest in Gothic architecture and in the architecture of the Orient existed alongside the classical tradition, which was itself augmented by the discovery of Greek architecture. The idea of a return to a strict and primitive classicism based on *a priori* principles and natural law was one aspect of a new situation giving rise to the new possibility of choice. Choice implies a standard of taste and a

2 The Orders according to Claude Perrault.

3 Interpretation of the Vitruvian Orders by Serlio.



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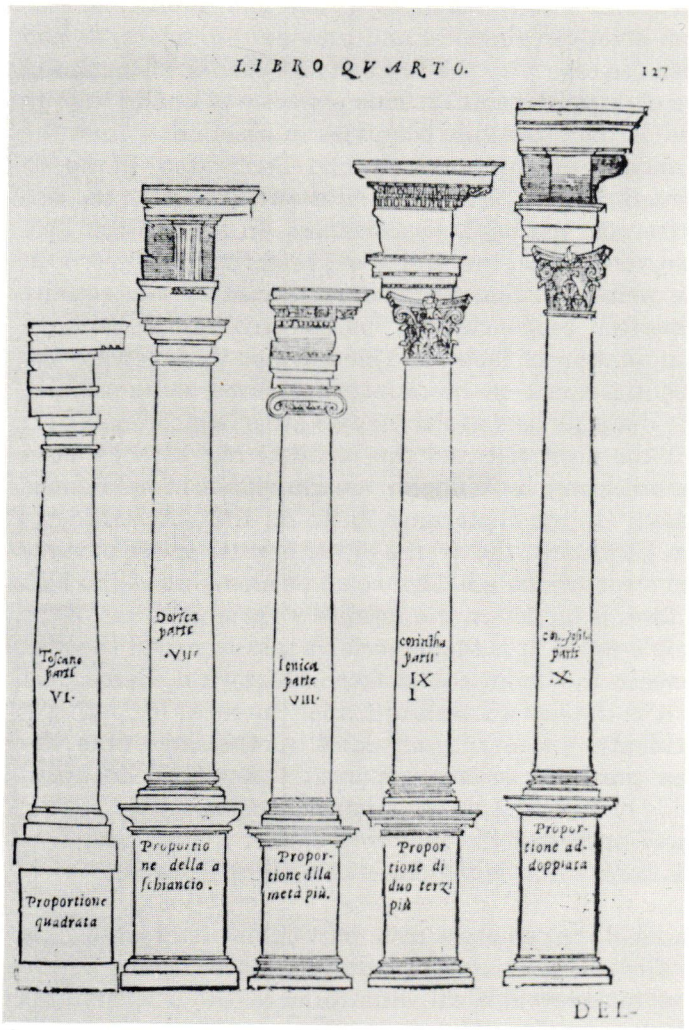

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decision as to the correct norm — whether this norm is based on a relative scale or on an absolute standard.

Returning to our definitions, we see that the "concern for the institutions of the past" and the "use of historical forms" belong to a broader category of historical phenomena than the historicist theory that "all socio-cultural phenomena are historically determined." It was not until the historicist theory was formulated that the idea of the relativism of cultural values became an issue. The theory made it impossible, in principle, to favor one style over another, since each style was organically related to a particular spatio-temporal culture, and could not be judged except on its own terms. Yet historicist thought was not able to accept all that its theory implied. The historian Friedrich Meinecke[2] pointed out that there were two ways in which historicism attempted to avoid the implications of relativism: by setting up one period as a paradigm, and by what he called the "flight into the future."

Representing an historical period as a paradigm would seem contrary to the principles of historicism and, in doing so, historical thought was clearly reverting to eclectic practice. But there was a difference: eclecticism had never severed completely its connections with the classical tradition. It had merely qualified this tradition by examples from other styles, either using these styles as ways of giving variety to classical themes, or using them to purify the notion of classicism itself — as in the case of Gothic and Greek architecture. With romanticism and historicism, the break from classicism was complete. The style now set up as paradigmatic was Gothic, since Gothic represented not just a particular set of poetic associations, but a type of "organic" society. Here we see a coincidence between positivism and historicism similar to that which I have noted already in Leopold von Ranke. For instance, in seeking the essence of Gothic architecture, Viollet-le-Duc reduced it to a set of instrumental principles which could provide a dynamic model for contemporary practice.

The other method by which historicism tried to overcome relativism — the flight into the future — depended on a different set of ideas. One of the essential notions of historicism was, as I have said, the idea of development. Not only were various cultures the result of geographical and temporal displacement, not only were cultures unique and irreducible to a single set of principles, but they were subject to a law of growth and change. The notion of genetic development was essential. Without it, the various guises in which the ideal appeared in history would be entirely random and arbitrary, since there was no longer any absolute ideal against which to measure them. It was necessary to replace the notion of a fixed ideal, to which historical phenomena had to conform, with the notion of a *potential* ideal, which historical events were *leading up to.* Carried to its extreme, this view led to the idea of history as a teleological process, in which all historical events were determined by final causes. History was now oriented toward an apocalyptic future and no longer toward a normative past. It was the philosophers of historicism, particularly Hegel, who stressed in this way the determinism of history, not the historians themselves. Indeed, von Ranke (following von Humboldt) warned against the tendency of philosophy to schematize history by resorting to final causes. To him this was just as unacceptable as the classical notion of natural law, because it denied what to the historians was the basis of historical development — the spiritual independence of the historical subject and the operation of free will in history.

Hegelian idealism, with its emphasis on historical teleology, replaced the will of the historical subject by the supra-personal will of history itself. The ideal was not seen as informing the individual protagonists of history, as von Humboldt and von Ranke taught; it constituted an implacable historical will, of which the historical subject was the unconscious agent.

The Hegelian notion of historical determinism, however much it was misunderstood,[3] had a profound influence on the framework of thought characteristic of the artistic avant-garde in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. Art and architecture could only fulfill their historical destinies by turning their backs on tradition. Only by looking toward the future could they be faithful to the spirit of history and give expression in their works to the spirit of the age. In architecture this meant the continual creation of new forms under the impulse of social and technological development, and the symbolic representation of society through these forms. Historians of the modern movement, such as Giedion, Pevsner, and Banham, have tended to emphasize the developmental aspect of the avant-garde.

But this mode of thought was not the only, and perhaps not the most important, ingredient of the twentieth-century avant-garde. Another influence was what Phillipe Junod, in his book *Transparence et opacité*,[4] has called "gnosiological idealism," whose principal theoretician was the nineteenth-century philosopher Konrad Fiedler. Growing out of the general atmosphere of historicist tradition, this theory systematically sought to exclude from artistic creation the last traces of the idea of *imitation*. It rejected the notion that the work of art is a mirror in which one sees something else. Hegel himself was the principal victim of this radical idealism, since he held the view that the work of art was a reflection of an idea external to itself. The notion of the "opacity" of the work of art was developed further by the Russian Formalists of the 1920s, and became an essential component of avant-garde thinking.

At the opposite extreme, there was in modernism the idea of natural law, and a return to the basic principles of artistic form, which was close to the primitive neoclassicism of the Enlightenment. The tension between this and historicism is particularly noticeable in the writings and buildings of Le Corbusier.

It is not these two aspects of modernism that its critics have attacked, but rather the idea of historical determinism. They have correctly pointed out that a blind faith in the future has the effect of handing over control of the architectural environment to market forces and their bureaucratic representatives. A movement that started as the symbolic representation of utopia has ended by becoming a tool of everyday economic practice. Critics have shown also (and equally correctly) that the systematic proscription of history as a source of architectural values cannot be sustained once the initial idealistic impetus of modernism has been lost.

What these "post-modernist" critics have been unable to establish is a *theory of history* that will give a firm basis for their new-found historical consciousness. Because their attack has been restricted mostly to two aspects of modernism — historical determinism and historical amnesia — all they have been able to propose is the reversal of these two ideas: 1. History is not absolutely determined; 2. The acceptance of tradition, *in some form*, is the condition of architectural meaning. These two propositions, being reactions to other propositions, remain negative, and lack a systematic and legitimate basis of their own.

The fact that history cannot be considered as determined and teleological in any crude sense leaves open to question the relation between the historicity of all cultural production, on one hand, and the cumulative and normative nature of cultural values, on the other. We can hardly expect to return to a classical interpretation of history in which a universal natural law is the fixed *a priority* against which one measures all cultural phenomena. One of the chief reasons why this would be inconceivable is that today we have a different relation to history than did the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century the dominant classes were well-read in the classics and were able able to interpret their culture in terms of classical culture, using it to provide examples and models for their conduct. We have seen that the notion of universal norms was a product of a lively and concrete sympathy for the historical past. Today, our knowledge of the past has increased vastly, but it is the province of specialists, and is equal and opposite to a widespread ignorance and vagueness about history in our culture. The more our knowledge of the past becomes objective, the less the past can be applied to our own time. The use of the past to supply models for the

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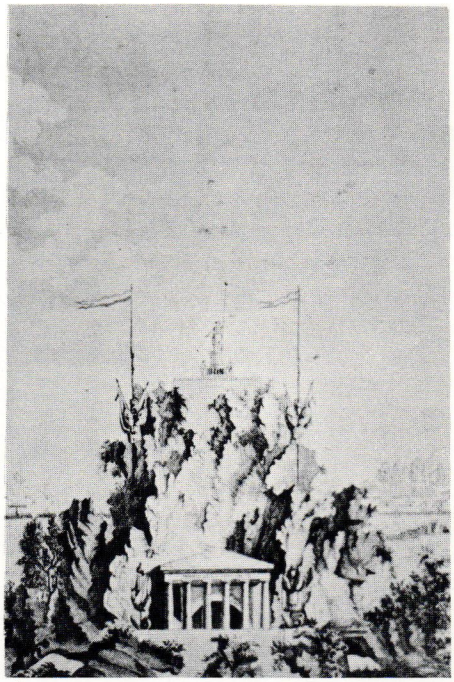

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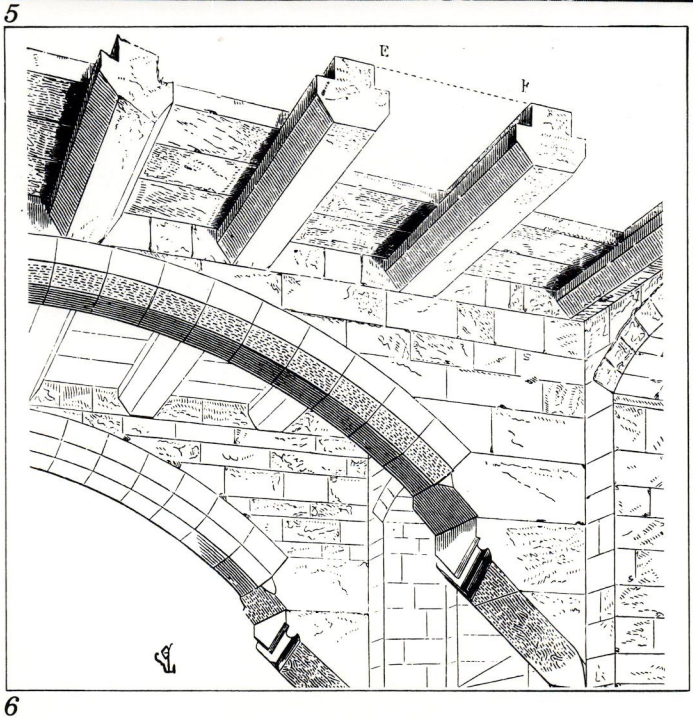
4 Claude Cochet le jeune, Design for Revolutionary Pageant, Lyons, 30 May 1790.
5 Claude-Louis Chatelet, Le Rocher, Folie Sainte-James, Neuilly *Collection Jacques Lebel.*
6 Viollet Le-Duc, Construction detail from Dictionnaire Raisonné.



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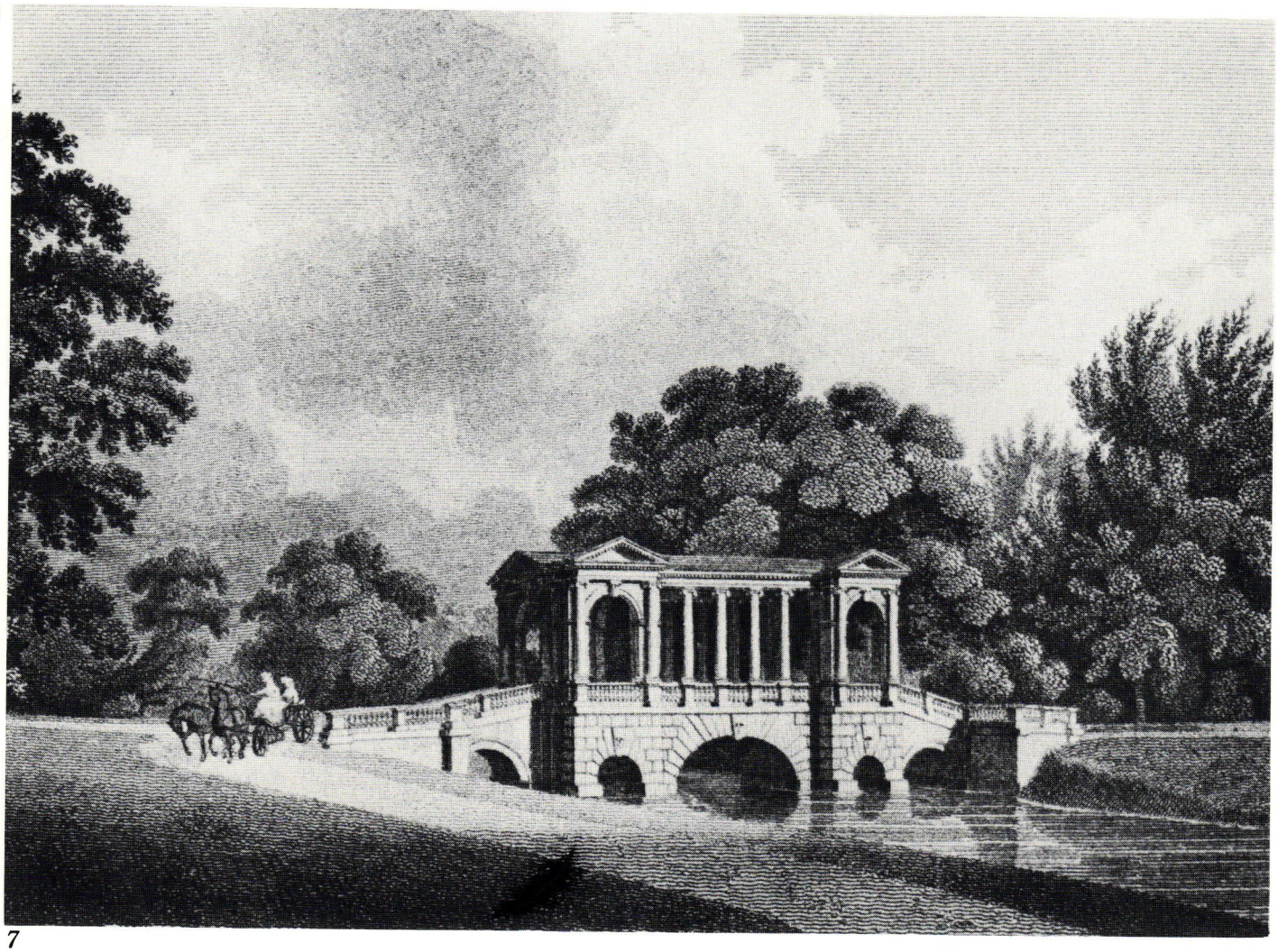
7,8 Engravings of the garden at Stowe. B. Seeley, 1797.



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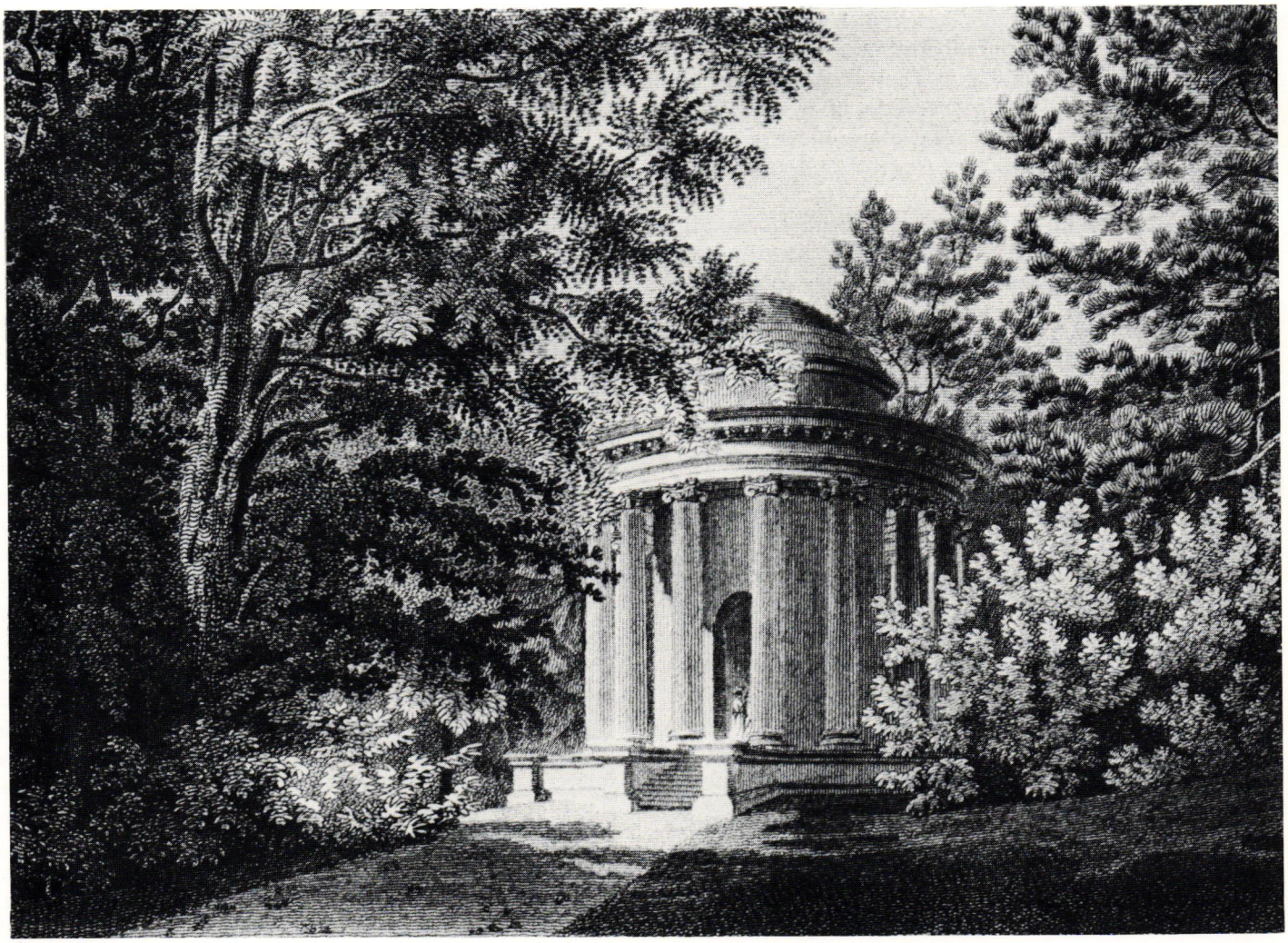

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present depends on the ideological distortion of the past; and the whole effort of modern historiography is to eliminate these distortions. In this sense, modern historiography is the direct descendant of historicism. As such, it is committed to a relativistic view of the past, and resists the use of history to provide direct models.

On the other hand, it is equally difficult to imagine a culture that ignores history altogether. The flight into the future, which characterized the phase of historicism that directly affected modernism, deliberately tried to instill a forgetfulness of history. In so doing, it brought to light what may be considered two weaknesses in nineteenth-century historicist thought. First, it did not take account of cultural borrowing. In its concern to stress the uniqueness of each culture, it overlooked the extent to which all cultures, even the most "indigenous," are based on the ideas and principles of other, pre-existent cultures. There has never been such a thing as an absolutely pure culture; to demonstrate this, one has only to mention the attraction of the various proto-renaissances to the medieval world, and the influence that the classical world never ceased to exert on European culture.

The second weakness of historicism (closely related to the first) is that it tended to suppress the role that the establishment of norms and types has always played in cultural development. It confused two things which are, in fact, unrelated: it confused the way in which cultures might be studied with the way in which cultures operate. While it might be fruitful to study history as if the culture under examination were a unique organism, it does not follow that it was such an organism in fact. How, for instance, could an historicist study a culture that believed in natural law, and in the principle of the imitation of the idea, without somehow contradicting his own method? To do this, historical analysis would have to reconcile two contradictory principles within itself. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is an important principle that must be faced. It suggests that our culture — and our architecture, as one of its manifestations — must make the same reconciliation. The uniqueness of our culture, which is the product of historical development, must be reconciled with the palpable fact that it operates within an historical context, and contains within itself its own historical memory.

In what way can cultural memory manifest itself in architecture today? In my opinion it cannot do this by reverting to eclecticism, if by eclecticism we mean something belonging to eighteenth and nineteenth century culture. I have tried to show that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries eclecticism depended on the power of architectural style to become a sign or emblem for a certain set of ideas. But this depended on a knowledge of, and sympathetic identification with, the styles of the past, and an ability to subject these styles to ideological distortions — distortions that were nonetheless predicated on a thorough knowledge of the styles themselves. Architecture is a form of knowledge by experience. But it is precisely this element of inward knowledge and experience that is lacking today. When we try to recover the past in architecture we cross a chasm — the chasm of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which the power of architectural style to convey definite meanings disappeared entirely. Modern eclecticism is no longer ideologically active as it was in the nineteenth century. When we revive the past now, we tend to express its most general and trivial connotations; it is merely the "pastness" of the past that is evoked. The phenomenon was already recognized eighty years ago by Aloîs Riegl, who drew attention to the two popular attitudes toward artistic works then prevalent: "newness" and "oldness." As an emblem of "pastness," modern historical recovery actually resists too accurate a memory of past styles; it is only in this way that it can become an item of cultural consumption. As modernism itself was recuperated by capitalism, so is "post-modernism" in all its guises. Modernism and "post-modernism" are two sides of the same coin. They are both essentially modern phenomena, and are equally remote from the attitude toward history of the eighteenth and ninteenth centuries.

Given the fact that what we produce today is bound to be

specifically modern, no matter how we incorporate the past into our work, we should look at that other tradition — the tradition of modernism — to see which of its elements inevitably persist in our attitude toward works of art and architecture. I have mentioned two aspects that are independent of the notion of historical determinism and the flight into the future: the opacity of the work of art and the search for primitive sources. Opacity denies that the work of art is merely a reflection or imitation of some model, whether this model is thought of as a platonic form, or as consisting of the "real" world. In this sense it resists both realist idealism and naturalism. But it is not inconsistent with the idea of historical memory. By giving priority to the autonomy of artistic disciplines, it allows, even demands, the persistence of tradition as something that is internalized in these disciplines. The artistic tradition is one of the "objective facts" that is transformed by the creative act.

It seems to me, therefore, that it is valid to approach the problem of tradition in architecture as the study of architecture as an autonomous discipline — a discipline that incorporates into itself a set of aesthetic norms that is the result of historical and cultural accumulation, and which takes its meaning from this. But these aesthetic values can no longer be seen as constituting a closed system of rules or as representing a fixed and universal natural law. The notion of the opacity of the work of art and the search for basic principles do not presuppose that architecture is a closed system which has no contact with outside life, with the non-aesthetic. The aesthetic comes into being anew through the existence of a particular material situation, even if it is not wholly conditioned by this situation. If today's historians tend toward investigation of material conditions of the artistic production of the past, today's architects must be aware of the transformation of the tradition brought about by these conditions.

What I have said implies that historicism, considered as the theory by which all socio-cultural phenomena are historically determined, must still form the basis of our attitude toward history. But the sleight of hand by which historicist idealism replaced the fixed ideal with an emergent idea can no longer be accepted. Such a unitary and mystical concept is bound to lead to systems of thought — both political and artistic — that presuppose what, in fact, remains to be proved: that any given historical system is an organic unity leading inevitably to the progress of mankind.

On the contrary, all systems of thought, all ideological constructs, are in need of constant, conscious criticism; and the process of revision can come about only on the assumption that there is a higher and more universal standard against which to measure the existing system. History provides both the ideas that are in need of criticism and the material out of which this criticism is forged. An architecture that is constantly aware of its own history, but constantly critical of the seductions of history, is what we should aim at today.

Notes

1. Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967).
2. Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, translation by J.E. Anderson (London, Routledge and K. Paul, 1972).
3. In the *Introduction to the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel lays greater stress on the need for an empirical approach than is usually supposed. Indeed, his theory seems problematic less because of its implied determinism than because of its failure to resolve the contradiction between determinism and freedom.
4. Phillipe Junod, *Transparence et opacité* (Lausanne, L'Age d'homme, 1976).

Figure Credits

1 From *Réimpression de L'architecture française de Jacques-François Blondel* (Paris: Librairie centrale des beaux-arts, and E. Lévy, 1904-1905).
2 From Claude Perrault, *A Treatise of the Five Orders of Columns in Architecture*, English by John James (London: B. Motte, 1708).
3 From Sebastien Serlio, *Architettura di Sebastiano Serlio Bolgnese* (Venice, Italy: Combi and La Nou, 1663).
4, 5 From Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
6 From Viollet Le Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française de XVeme au XVIeme siècle* (Paris: B. Bance, 1858-1868).
7, 8 From B. Seeley, *Stowe: A Description of the House and Gardens* (Buckingham: Seeley, 1797).

Future in the Past

Phillipe Junod

1 Charles Gleyre Les éléphants, *c.1849.*

We often assert that the nineteenth century was *the* century of history. The people of the nineteenth century were themselves aware of this, and were sometimes tempted to share this honor with the previous century. In the introduction to his historical utopian novel *Uchronie* (1876), Charles Renouvier describes the eighteenth century as "the first century of *mankind* in 1800 years," and explains that "we see mankind taking itself as an object ... Therefore, this century is also the century of history, a feature that would strike us more than it does, if we ourselves were not historians and antiquarians of everything, and, I dare say, at all costs."[1]

Several years later the awareness of this historical hypertrophia had expanded and drew a stern review from Charles Morice in his *La littérature de tout à l'heure* (1889). After defining his century as "the century of historians," he concludes, "There lay all its honor and yet all its error. This curiosity for the past is beautiful, but it is only a beautiful dead thing, a work founded on the ruins of past times, if a keen and living faith in the future does not make it beam like a beacon to light up the gloomy future ... This great concern for the past shows an impotence to bear the present and to prepare the future." Later he puts forth his diagnosis, which is significant in itself: "The historical sense is a symptom of the old age of a race, a sign of decadence."[2]

What is historicism? It is beyond the scope of this article to define the aggregate of phenomena between which we establish a common denominator labeled "historicism." I would simply reflect on the problems of its definition. Schematically, one could say that historicism implies at the same time a *philosophy* and a *vision* of history, a *theory* of evolution, and a *perception* of historical time. It is very difficult to dissociate between these interrelated intuitive and conceptual elements, and this fact only aims to mark the limits of this discussion. Instead of systematically questioning the historians and the philosophers of time, I will try to reveal the signs of a new way of living the time of history as they appear in artists' creations and critical statements.

As with the perception of space, to which it is closely related, the perception of time is an historical variable. To illustrate this, we can compare statements of different epochs concerning the relation of the present to antiquity. In the dedication to Brunelleschi in the Italian version of his treatise *Della pittura* (1436), Alberti develops an idea destined to a great future, namely, a rivalry between the moderns and the ancients. The moderns have more merit, he writes, because, contrary to their illustrious forerunners, they have no models by which to learn or follow. This is less surprising when one considers that remnants of the antique visual culture, especially painting, were few at the beginning of the quattrocento, and texts alone (Pliny, Vitruvius) allowed a glimpse of the lost splendor. Hence the Albertian projection of a three-phased history (Golden Age, Decadence, Renaissance) was reminiscent of the ternary structure of Christian time: Earthly Paradise, Fall, Redemption. Three centuries later, Reynolds[3] and Diderot developed an opposing argument: we do not hold much merit because we *can* copy our forerunners; being the first, *they* had to invent. One can see here a new scheme, that of cyclical time matched with a nostalgic awareness of being too late and therefore condemned to repeat what has been done already.

For both Alberti and Reynolds, history was still one-dimensional: there was past and present, antique and modern, and the choice was only twofold: to invent or to copy, the only model being the antique and its reincarnations (for instance, the Renaissance). Future generations, however, confronted multiple choices; the past subdivided into a series of concurrent stylistic options, each vested with an assortment of ethical, political, and historical associations. Should one choose Greek or Gothic? The classic or the exotic? Chinese or Hindu? This new situation, the spectacular growth of possibilities, aroused new justifications of choices, and thus a new philosophy of the history of forms.

A letter written by the painter Peter von Cornelius to the Prince of Bavaria, dated 26 November 1820, reveals yet another historical consciousness. Having been asked to give his opinion on the plans of the Walhalla, a project for a German national monument, Cornelius expressed regret at the fact that the Prince had not chosen the *original* and *genuine* German style, that is, the Gothic. But his critique of the neoclassical style is only relative: the Italians, from Brunelleschi to Bramante, could legitimately resort to antique models as long as they were used in a "national" spirit which justified the borrowing. The explicit theory of evolution contained in Cornelius' statement is as follows: "What actually lives takes its external form from deep determinations and grows organically from there; such growth and development we call history; nothing can escape history, least of all art."[4]

One is struck by the coincidence: it is precisely at the time when stylistic unity seems to burst apart, when nascent eclecticism brings in free will to choose a formal language, that one defines a determinist theory of organic growth, as if the authenticity Cornelius tries to guarantee has to redeem the gratuity of the reference to a former cultural stage. At the very moment when the evolution of forms seems to hesitate, to stray about, and surely to subdivide, historical continuity is proclaimed by *decree* and founded on the notion of *internal necessity*, a concept also destined for a promising future.

In other words, Cornelius' theory seems to assume here a role of compensation toward a practice that reveals a crisis, the crisis of the historical conscience. It is as if the fact of resorting to a natural image, that of natural growth, has to amend the weakness of a cultural link, the relationship connecting creation and tradition. The distance denied by Cornelius in his favoring of the neo-Gothic not only separates form and content, but also past and present. The perception of this distance was painful, as witnessed by the different attempts of artificial restoration which constituted the revivals.

I would like to center my reflections on historicism around this notion of distance, which I think is primary. Panofsky's theory of the parallel between a shifting historical consciousness and the development of Albertian

perspective at the time of the Renaissance substantiates the objective relationship between the viewer and the thing seen, the objectivity of vision. Unlike the Middle Ages, which had the tendency to live antiquity in the present, that is, to bring it up to date, the Renaissance introduced, by its archaeological projects, a discontinuity (that of the Dark Ages) between the present and the object of its nostalgia. It is an enticing idea in so far as it allows Panofsky to develop his thesis of perspective as symbolic form. But it seems too imperative an example, in that it credits the Renaissance with a progressive phenomenon that will come much later, near its end. In fact, if we pose classicism versus historicism instead of the Middle Ages versus quattrocento, we can apply the same scheme and see that the archaeological perspective progressed in a spectacular manner. This raises the problem of the place and status of the neoclassical movement: Should it be considered as the last "renascence" (to use Panofsky's term) or as the first "revival," that is, the beginning of historicism?

It seems to me that this question (perhaps a bit naive) has merit, making clear the way we use historical categories without always being aware of the risk of our entrapment. The neoclassical can only be considered as a point of juncture. In their beginnings, Greek and Roman art had a monopoly on references to the past, but this monopoly would soon be breached by the competition of the Etruscans, as well as the Egyptians. As for the Davidian return to the antique, averred as an extension of Poussinistic classicism, it assumed a certain continuity with tradition, while the reference to the Republican ideals of "exempla virtutis" represented an endeavor to live antiquity in the present.

But as archaeological knowledge was augmented and the will for an accurate reconstitution became radical, artists developed an awareness of severance, of an irremediable loss, the loss of what previously allowed an innocent adhesion to the past. Certainly, there were some attempts to make real a past historical stage, as with the movements of the "Barbus," the "troubadours," the "Nazarenes," and the "pre-Raphaelites." But these were desperate attempts which would only sanction and render obvious the very distance they were trying to close. The loss of innocence, the ransom of this historicity lived in a new way, clearly expressed itself in the countless nineteenth-century appeals for primitivism and original naiveté. To summarize this evolution one could say that if the Middle Ages lived the past in the Present Tense, the Renaissance and classicism lived their pasts in a tense known in French as *le passé composé*, or in English as the Past Perfect; that is, a past extended at the present. The historical sensibility of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, was conjugated in the Past Tense, or sometimes, as we shall see, as Future in the Past, a sort of retrospective anticipation.

In other words, at the end of the eighteenth century a crisis of the historical consciousness affected the perception of time. This was particularly true for the perception of the present, then stricken by a sort of a precariousness or a relativity which I believe was the result of an outdistancing process. To describe the phenomenon, I borrow from *Traité de caractérologie* by Le Senne[5] the distinction between "primary" and "secondary" characters: the first character "belongs as much as possible to the present and forgets the past and the future," while the secondary character is defined by "the solidarity between the dependence upon the past due to the extension of his impressions and the action toward a distant future." Of course, one cannot concede anything more than a descriptive value to these definitions, and I am only too aware of the difficulty of projecting an analysis of singular cases over an entire generation.

Nevertheless, the perception of time is primarily a reality of an individual consciousness (even if it cannot avoid social/cultural conditioning); and the fact is that one finds these characteristics which define the collective historical conscience of an epoch in several individuals. One example: Restif de la Bretonne, who incidentally is the author of one of the first anticipatory novels (*Les Posthumes*, 1802), wrote in his autobiography *Monsieur Nicolas*: "I had as a main aim to prepare myself for future anniversaries, a taste that I have had all

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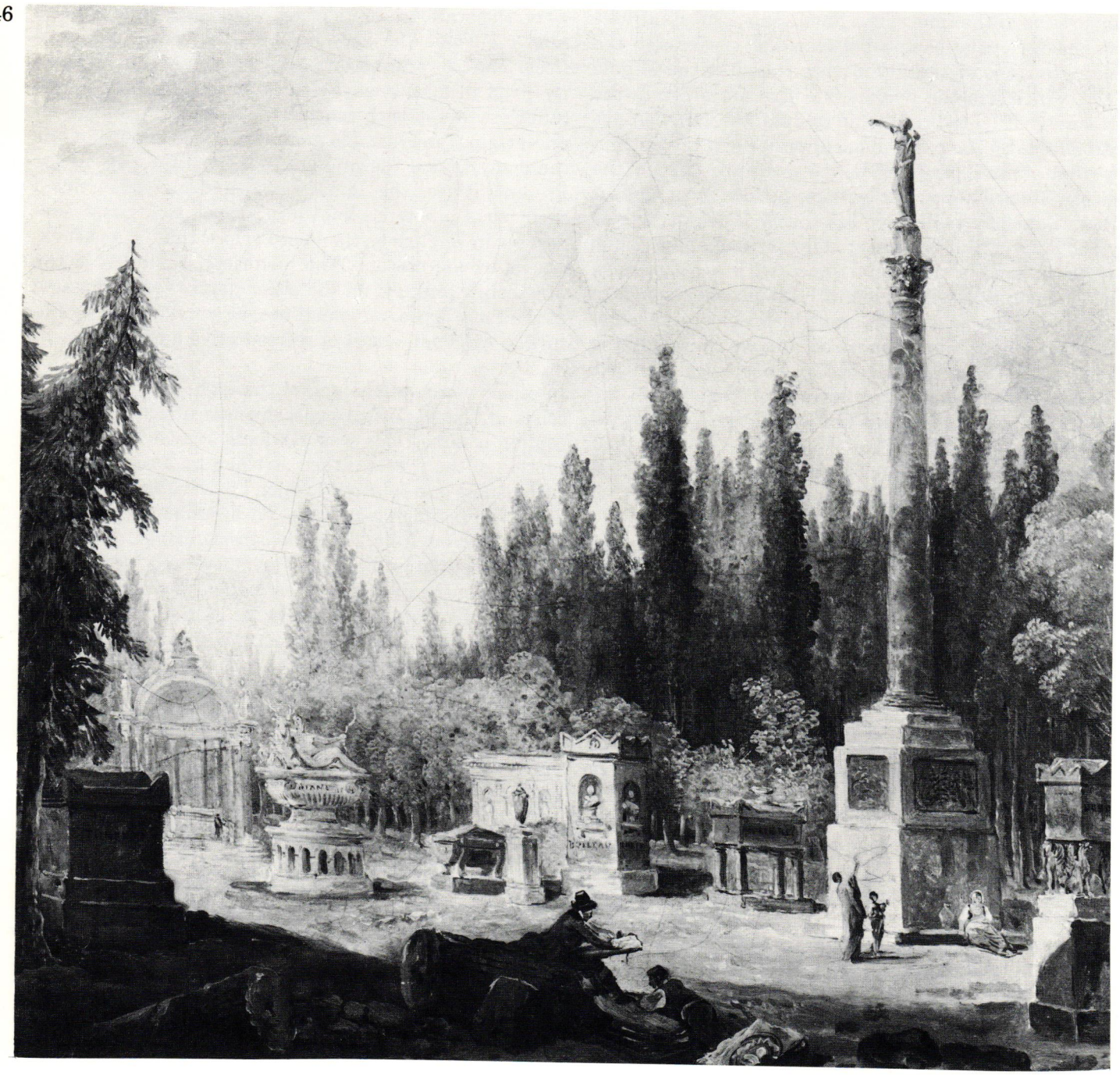

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2 Hubert Robert, Le jardin du Musée des monuments français, *c.1802*.
3 C. Bourgeois and A. Massard, La ruine dans le parc de Betz, *1808*.

my life, and which would undoubtedly be the last to go. For me, the future is a deep and terrifying chasm I don't dare to sound; but I do the same as people who fear the water do: I throw a stone. There is an event that is happening to me; I write it down, then I add: 'What shall I think in a year, at the same day, at the same hour?' This thought tickles me." And later on: "I take delight in the present; then I turn myself to the past; I enjoy things that are as the things that are not anymore, and if my soul is in a convenient condition ... I throw a new stone into the future, and the river of time must make it emerge in his flowing ... "[6]

It seems to me that the structure of lived time, as it appears in de la Bretonne's curious text (which I cannot help considering as symptomatic), may be found in different confessions from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fission of the present torn between the past and the future caused contradictory impulses: progress and tradition, the two myths that guided the historical conscience of a century obsessed by its entry into history, its historical identity. The crisis of identity manifested itself at several levels, making it difficult to reduce it to a schematic definition. The existential *malaise*, probably best expressed by Gauguin's famous picture *D'où venons-nous, qui sommes-nous, où allons nous?* (1897), was perceived quickly as such. Speaking of his contemporaries, Musset writes that they were "divided between the regrets of their past glory and the hopes for an incessantly postponed freedom," and his *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* witnessed by its own title a painful historical consciousness. The diagnosis was attempted later. In his book entitled *Une maladie morale, le mal du siècle* (1880), Paul Charpentier calls the end of the eighteenth century the beginning of "a great period of melancholia."[7]

The causes of this phenomenon are surely too complex to be developed here. One thinks, of course, about the economical, technological, social, and political changes that shook Europe at that time. The beginnings of industrialization, the French Revolution and its consequences, and the coming to power of the bourgeoisie are determining elements. However, I would rather recall the importance of the "internal" causes, that is, the cultural ones.

The aesthetic field was shaken in the eighteenth century by a crisis that affected its whole value system. In previous centuries, the quality of a work had been measured against the standard of the past, that is, by its conformity to a tradition. With the coming of what we still call, for lack of a better term, romanticism, innovation and originality would confer upon the work of art a value whose consecration projected into the future. The artist claimed the status of a prophet, insisting on visionary powers which would be acknowledged by future generations. Stendhal wrote for the readers of the end of the nineteenth century, long after he was to live. Nevertheless, the frenzied partisans of the *tabula rasa* would often find ancestors for themselves in order to be part of a genealogy. This reflex appears throughout the history of the avant-garde, well into the twentieth century.

We have here what I called above the new "multidimensionality" of history. Until Winckelmann, the aesthetic norm had kept, at least in appearance, its unique identity: the antique. It is true that every neoclassic artifact redefined or reinvented its classicism, and that the antiquity of the Carolingian *renovatio* was not that of the Renaissance humanists, nor that of Poussin nor David. However, their choice was twofold: the classical or the non-classical. History was like a linear trajectory made of an alternation of progress and decadence, of renascence and oblivion, of approach or deviation from a norm considered as invariable, that is, eluding time. In this sense, romanticism could be defined as the explicit and ultimate refusal of the uniqueness of this norm. Against the monopoly of the Mediterranean ideal, the romantics opposed the restoration of national traditions, be they Northern or Eastern. One put Ossian against Homer, Dürer against Raphael, the Gothic against the Doric. For some, everything that had a classical appearance became suspect, thus the de Goncourt brothers could write: "There are only two

kinds of painters: the primitive painters and the painters of decadence. The others are nothing." (We find here the two-way movement into the past and toward the future.) The "others," those who had chosen to restore the ideal of the antique, did it deliberately. The neo-Greek option thus had a totally different significance from the first neoclassicism, precisely because of that deliberation.

It is in this new context, characterized by a plural stylistic and cultural choice, that the new historical relativism was defined. Delacroix wrote his article *Des variations du beau*, paving the way for Riegl, the theorist of the *Kunstwollen* and for all the rehabilitations of our century. But this capital mutation would have been unthinkable without another phenomenon that affects us now more than ever: the extension of what Malraux called our "imaginary museum." One cannot overrate the importance of the change that affected the cultural horizon, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of the extraordinary extension of the corpus of available visual documents. The cumulative effect of the development of archaeology, of the multiplication of the museums, the growth of the means of reproduction and diffusion, and then colonial expansion, modified radically the field of historical conscience, geographically and chronologically. The taste for exoticism, reinforced by the means and frequency of travel (not only to Italy), added a universal dimension to the cultural map, while the search for more remote archaisms gave new dimensions to the Western epic. To the results of archaeology, one should add the contribution of new sciences such as paleontology, which added a prehistory to history, thus strengthening the bond of relativity.

In his famous *Discours sur les révolutions de la surface du globe* (1812), Cuvier expounded his theory of catastrophes,[8] which struck the imaginations of his contemporaries and left some traces in the painting and literature of his time. A vertigo of the perception of historical time emphasized the precariousness of the present. The sudden growth of historical knowledge and cultural geography put into light the inseparableness of temporal and spatial axes. The privileged places of this junction were the museum and the garden. In a museum, historical time and space were exhibited in a show space, the gallery. In the Anglo-Chinese garden, the set of *fabriques* and the samples of styles transposed, by a promenade, the new paradigmatic axis into a syntagm, which is precisely the principle of eclecticism. In both cases, one finds the juxtaposition of the successive with the simultaneous, the same effect of anachronical accumulation that appeared in several nineteenth-century paintings representing the evolution of mankind.

Historicism is also a *synoptical* vision of history because of its encyclopedic nature. We can follow the development of this vision by a series of images which, prepared by Piranesi or Pannini, would preclude the great didactic and monumental decorations of the later Academism. Ingres' *L'apothéose d'Homère* from the Louvre, Delaroche's hemicycle at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and the Albert Memorial in London are classic examples in the limited field of history of the arts. Incidentally, history painting often had the tendency to become the painting of History, as illustrated by Chenevard's project for the Pantheon, a corollary for Hugo's almost contemporary *La légende des siècles* (1859). Hugo found his inspiration at the source: he attended the philosophers of history, Hegel, Ballanche, and Edgar Quinet. The phenomenon was not new: the program of the Germanic pantheon of the Walhalla, one generation earlier, had been drawn up by an historian, too — Johannes von Müller, whose history courses at Göttingen University had been attended by a young student, the future patron Ludwig of Bavaria. But the synoptical vision of Chenevard, his "palingenesia" or "the march of humankind toward its future across hardships and alternations between ruins and renascences," was extended at a universal scale and marked by a strong dose of syncretism, inherited from a religious historian, Creuzer. That is, the chronological and geographical dimensions mingled in a spectacular manner.

If the mingling of different moments and places in a museum space had the symptomatic value we bestow

4 The ruin of Betz (Oise), designed by Hubert Robert.

5 Hubert Robert, Les pyramides.

6 Joseph Gandy, Architectural ruins, a vision, *1832*.

7 Hubert Robert, Vue imaginaire de la grande galerie en ruines, *1796*.

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8 Gustav Doré, engraving from London, A Pilgrimage, *1872.*
9 Charles Meryon, Titre des eaux fortes sur Paris, *1852.*
10 Felix Bracquemond and Charles Meryon, Portrait of Meryon, *1854.*

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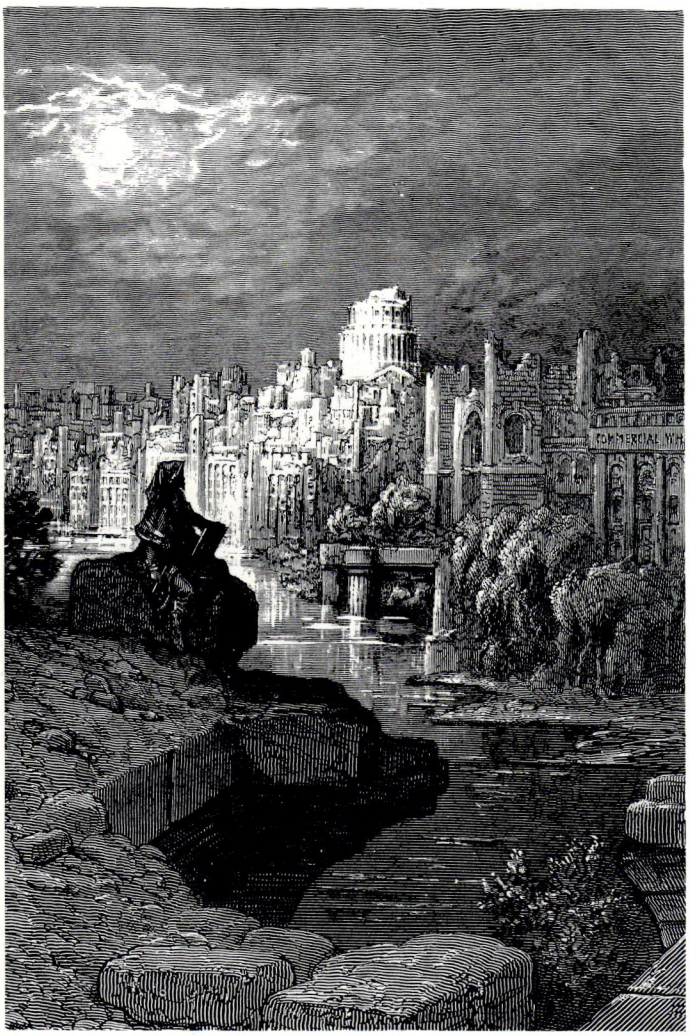

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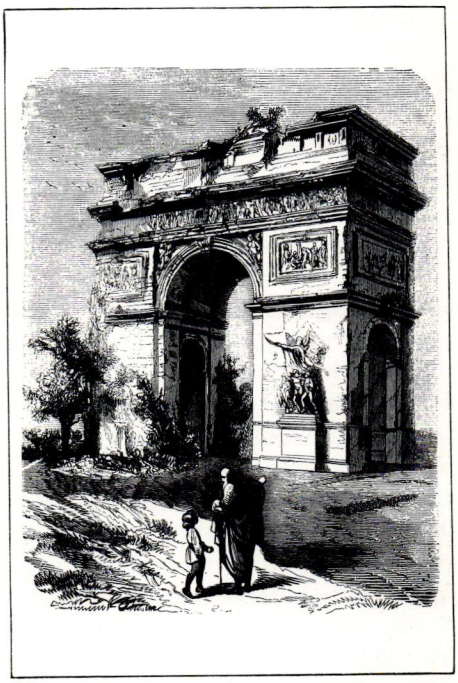
upon it, we must find other clues to confirm our definition of what could be called the "historical imagination" of the epoch. In this sense, the nineteenth century was the century of estrangement and nostalgia, defining the parallel between the perception of time and space. One witnessed the birth of a new form of utopia, the *uchronie*. These travels in time, suggested by new literary genres like the historical novel and anticipatory literature, answered a need for chronological exoticism.

On the other hand, nostalgia unfolded itself in space and invested places far away at the price of geographical anachronism — such as the Royal Pavilion of Brighton or certain paintings of Gustave Moreau. From this point of view, orientalism and revivals are strictly parallel phenomena, which may sometimes enter into combinations, as shown by the theories of the Oriental origin of the Gothic. The crucial point, or the common denominator, of these different manifestations is always the notion (or sensation) of *distance*, which can be spatial as well as temporal. In this respect, the *Lettres persannes* (contemporary to the tastes of *chinoiserie*, which in its turn prepared the way for later Japanism) foretold the theme of the anticipated ruin: outdistancing 'here,' on the one hand, and 'now,' on the other. To prove further the adequacy of a spatial and temporal parallel, I would like to cite a text by William Hazlitt, published in 1821 with a revealing title: *Why Distant Objects Please*. After founding the aesthetic value of spatial distance associated with the infinite and the passionate, Hazlitt states: "Distance of time has much the same effect as distance of place." The text plays on the analogy between the two kinds of distance. From the intimate experience of individual time, lived as a dull present situated between the memories of the lost paradise of childhood and the expectations of a future imaginary paradise, one passes through the metaphor of the "journey of life" to travel into historical time, then into "distant regions." What makes these experiences worthy is the distance between us and the perceived object: "It is the interval that separates us from it ... that excites ... "[9]

In the *Salon* of 1767 by Diderot, one finds similar



11 Gérard Séguin, illustration to Victor Hugo's L'Arc de triomphe, *1867.*

associations in the meditations on the ruins of Hubert Robert. The continuous exaltation of depth, remoteness, distance, and area (all constituting a very precocious intuition of the concept of the pictorial space) is *intimately* associated with dreaming of lived time and historical time. "The effect of these compositions ... is to leave you in a sweet melancholia," writes Diderot, defining what he calls "the poetics of ruins." Chronology and geography are conjugated in nourishing nostalgia: "Wander all over the world, but let me know where you are, in Greece, in Alexandria, in Egypt, in Rome. Embrace all epochs, but do *not* let me ignore the date of the monument ... in this sense, let yours still be learned ruins."[10]

It seems interesting to me that at the same time that the ruin re-enters the field of contemporary art, there is an attempt to grasp the coming of a new historical consciousness. What subject other than ruins can reveal better the lived perception of time that inaugurates every historical thought? We know well, due to the many existing studies, the spectacular development in the worship of ruins beginning with the second half of the eighteenth century. But we also know that this production had an older origin, and that the tradition went back at least to the Renaissance. Thus we have to try to define what gives to the ruins of historicism their specificity and distinguishes them from earlier examples.

To begin with, let us say that quantitative growth represents a mark in itself, sanctioned by the constitution of a genuine, autonomous, pictorial genre. The article "Ruine" from the *Encyclopédie* confirms this certificate of baptism: "One calls *ruin* the painting itself representing these ruins." But the fascination exerted by the new genre is but a clue to an aesthetic mutation of a different level.[11]

As Roland Mortier so well demonstrates in his remarkable study *La poétique des ruines en France* (1974), the ruin motif acquired a new function at the time of the Enlightenment.[12] For a long time, ruins were a purely referential sign, without autonomous value. Charged

with religious symbolism (punishment, fall of the pagan world) or moral symbolism (*memento mori, vanitas vanitatum, sic transit gloria mundi*), as a memorial for humanists, and as a document of Roman greatness (*Roma quanta fuit ipsa ruina docet*), the ruin was nothing but a pretext for a meditation on history and the fall of empires. Thus its beauty was only the beauty of the represented monument, an incomplete remembrance.

In the eighteenth century one notices a significant change: the ruin is more beautiful than the intact monument. This idea, expressed repeatedly from Diderot to Rodin, shows clearly that the ruin has conquered an autonomous visual existence and has a beauty of its own which can be registered in the new categories of the picturesque and of the sublime. Certainly, the ancient allegorical meaning attached to the theme endured, but it received a new dimension. The historical meditation impregnated itself with nostalgia, if not with melancholia, and with a certain masochistic note. The humanists, who had tried to update antiquity, gradually substituted a reverie that relished and exalted the distance separating them from this irremediably lost world.

In France, Diderot was the first theorist of the "poetics of ruins," which catalyzed the sensibility of pre-romanticism. Borrowing once again from England, where the taste for silence and solitude, the love of nature, the tendency toward irregularity and the non-finito first crystallized, Diderot developed this new aesthetic in a personal direction, and nourished it with a reflection on the lack of permanence which had been present in all his work. "Oh, the beautiful, the sublime ruins," he exclaimed before the paintings of Hubert Robert at the Salon of 1767. "The ideas that ruins awake in me are great. Everything disappears, everything perishes, everything passes. There is only the world that remains. There is only time that lasts. What age it is, this world! I am walking between two eternities. Wherever I cast a glance, the objects that surround me announce an end and resign me to the one who attends me." One can see how the ancient theme of *memento mori* is renewed in the form of bewilderment. From being retrospective, the meditation becomes prospective. "We cast our eyes on the remnants of a triumphal arch ... and we come back to ourselves. We anticipate the devastations of time, and our imagination scatters all over the world the buildings where we live ... We are the survivors of a whole nation that no longer exists; here is the first line of the poetics of the ruins." This almost Pascalian experience (the two eternities remind us of the two infinities) would generate many echoes, chiefly in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who wrote, "We like ruins because they throw us into the infinite" and "We are interested in them to the extent of their antiquity."[13]

A specialist of the ruins *à l'antique*, Hubert Robert distinguished himself by more remote excursions into the archaeological field, as is proved by his painting from Smith College. The geographical and historical distance aroused in the painting is doubled by the remoteness of the viewpoint and the suggestion of spatial distance, and takes a metaphorical value, as does the traveler near the ruins — as Diderot suggests. In his monograph on the ruins of Hubert Robert, Hubert Burda illuminates the extent to which the remoteness of the viewer is a constant that forms the theatrics of his architecture.[14] But physical distance is also the sign of a taste for the chronological exoticism which was then so common.

We have seen how the museum and the garden fulfilled analogical functions. Let us notice that a garden can also be a museum, as represented by Hubert Robert in *Monuments français*. One has to add that Robert's painting involved gardens and museums because he was the author of the project of the fake ruin of Betz (ca. 1780), and because he was appointed keeper of the Louvre Museum in 1778. It was in this position that he realized the project that will concern us in a moment.

Here is a painter whose taste for ruins made him subdue to his caprices monuments of different styles and epochs: Roman, Gothic ruins, or sometimes more recent objects such as the Porte Saint-Denis or the Sorbonne. Have we not here the illustration of a statement by Diderot which

reads: "One must ruin a palace in order to make it an interesting object"?[15] Robert never deprived himself of that interest, greedily sketching the demolitions offered by his time (the Bastille in 1789, Saint-Jean-en-Grève in 1800) or the fires, as those from Hôtel-Dieu (1772) or the Opéra (1781). In *L'Incendie de Rome* the aura of the catastrophe added the prestige of antiquity to create this ruin *in statu nascendi*, a manifestation of the sublime style. The picturesque is played on a register where the suggestive power of the temporal distance is no less important, as shown by the "putting into ruins" of Palladio's Villa Rotonda, or of Bramante's Tempietto. A new chapter of the *anticipated ruin* begins here.

The artificial ruins that multiplied in the gardens of the time are already "anticipated" ruins because the quality of becoming old was given to them from the beginning. We have two relatively late examples (1820-1830) coming from Lausanne. According to a non-corroborated tradition, they are the products of an oldness contest. The effect of moonlight does not make the reading easier; on the contrary, it favors the sense of anticipation; Chateaubriand or Madame de Staël were well aware of this when they visited Roman ruins by moonlight.[16] Although the fake ruin appeared as a typical phenomenon of the time, we do have older examples, such as the ruined bridge of Palazzo Barberini by Bernini (1629-1632), which had been preceded by the bizarre inventions of Bomarzo, or, if one believes the *Vita di Girolama Genga* by Vasari, even of Pesaro. But from the fake ruin to the future ruin there is a step, and Hubert Robert is almost the first to take it. It is true that an anonymous painting from the Rheims Museum, dating from the seventeenth century, represents the ruined church of Saint Niçaise, although the church was actually demolished much later, in 1799. But these exceptions confirm the fact that the phenomenon seems to develop suddenly from the end of the eighteenth century — a fact that makes the anticipated ruin more significant.

To my knowledge, three scholars have studied the theme of the anticipated ruin: André Corboz,[17] Günter Metken,[18] and Werner Oeschlin.[19] I agree entirely with their conclusions. I will simply try to put this phenomenon in a wider perspective, and in a slightly different context — that of the literary anticipation and its relationship with the development of archaeology — in order to emphasize its historical significance, which I think lies in the fact that it is a new way of perceiving historical time.

At the Salon of 1796, Hubert Robert exhibited two paintings that eventually became famous. The first one was a project of the Great Gallery in the Louvre. This vision described a future stage of the gallery (which would be finished only after the Second World War), but its inspiration, as Corboz showed, was part of a series of caprices on the theme of the vaulted gallery in antiquity, often demolished, which could have suggested the principle of top lighting. This translation of the past into the future is even more evident in the second view, entitled *Ruine d'après le tableau précédent* or *Vue imaginaire de la grande galerie en ruines*, in which the archaeological utopia corresponds *literally* to what we call in French *le futur antérieur* and in English, "future conditional," or "that which will have been." This fantasy, which would be reiterated two or three years later in another painting at the Louvre, and was followed by new projects for arranging the gallery, can be considered as a simple game within the genre of the caprice. However, it is no less a manner to set more value on the conception of the artist. As a young man, Robert's architectural inventions were *à l'antique* and at the same time asserted the precariousness of a present meant to become past in the future. For the first time in history, the historical outdistancing is *contemporary* with the invention; as Burda says, "The ruin is an expression of a new historical consciousness."[20]

This new historical dimension manifested itself in a slightly different manner in the work of Casper David Friedrich. We know two anticipated ruins by him: a view of the Meissen dome (about 1835; lost) and one of the Jakobikirche from Greifswald, which he compares with the actual state of the monument at the time. A

watercolor version of the same view presents some differences: in the foreground a demolished crypt (a family vault) seems to have a symbolic intention; this is often the case for Friedrich who, in a comment on the ruin of Meissen, explicitly developed the idea of a renewal of the church on its previous ruins. However, even when optimistic, the anticipation of decrepitude is a way of making relative the present.

The third classic of the anticipated ruin series is Soane's Bank of England, which Gandy represented in ruins about 1830. Oeschlin shows the richness and ambiguity of a project that was at the same time a synthetic analysis of the labyrinthical plan of the building, visible and understandable only when roofs are removed, and a caprice generated by the tradition of the picturesque ruin, present in the view of the ruined rotonde of 1832. Despite different approaches, these three experiences present the same temporal structure characterized by a translation of the archaeological perspective toward the future.

We can insert in this series of representations of Future in the Past the frontispiece of Meryon's album of Paris. The title is engraved on a vaguely funerary plate, whose old age is reinforced by fossil prints, a popular element after Cuvier. In fact, this device appears to be a development of Piranesi's frontispieces; the difference being that, for the Italian, the lettering gives us a clue as to the date of the represented monuments, which is by no means the case for Meryon. We question whether Bracquemond's portrait of Meryon, which opens this series of prints dedicated to Paris, had not been inspired by the portrait of Piranesi by Felice Polanzani, which opens equally the *Opere varie* of 1750. In each case, the effect of distance is achieved by a projection into the future of an archaeological perspective. If the portrait of Piranesi appears as the heir of a classical tradition, in which the individual is ennobled by a presentation of his bust *à l'antique*, which can be found even on the title pages of Van Dyck's *Iconography* or of the *Inventiones Heemskerckiane*, the lightly sarcastic character of Meryon's inset portrait, strengthened by the text ("the gloomy Meryon with a grotesque face"), is more likely to anticipate Ensor's self-portrait (1888), entitled *En 1960*, which renews in an ironical way the *memento mori* tradition.

This archaeological perspective gives a nostalgic color to Meryon's Paris; at times, it makes him reconstitute lost elements, such as the Pont-au-Change, the demolition of whose upper houses was represented by Hubert Robert. Meryon's recollection is also an expression of the menace to the old city represented by Haussmann's transformations, which Meryon resented as a personal affront.

The Piranesian layouts often used by Meryon, as in the case of *L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame* (another victim of the urbanist baron), can be found in the contemporary literature. For example, we have a text by Gautier, written as an introduction for Edouard Fournier's *Paris demoli* (1854), in which the romantic myth of Piranesi is reactivated: "It is a curious spectacle, these opened houses with their floors suspended over an abyss ... their stairs leading nowhere ... their bizarre crumbling and their violent ruins; one would say ... these were the uninhabitable architectures that Piranesi sketched with a feverish point in his prints."

The same archaeological perspective was present in an illustration of the 1853 Hetzel edition of Hugo's poem *A l'Arc de Triomphe*, dated 29 March 1837, which imagined the future ruin of a monument that had been inaugurated just a year earlier. As for the last print of Gustave Doré's and Blanchard Jerrold's *London, A Pilgrimage* (1872), it represented a future pilgrim from New Zealand meditating on the ruins of London. Distance is again exerted on the temporal and spatial axes.

By its vengeful aspect and its implied social criticism, Doré's print is attached to another tradition, that of the ruin as political allegory, developed among others by Diderot and Sebastien Mercier. The fall of the empires became the occasion for a lesson in militant or resigned history. The sketch of a ceiling from the Louvre by J.B.

Mauzaisse, entitled *Le temps montrant les ruines* (1820), in which one can see a demolished bust of Napoleon beside those of Homer and Laocoön, appeared as a vaguely nostalgic meditation on the consequences of Waterloo. Equally ambiguous are the ruins of the Vendôme column and of the Tuileries, two obvious symbols seen by two favorites of the Second Empire, Isidore Pils and Meissonier, in 1871. The tradition of the war ruin goes back at least to the eighteenth century, as can be seen in Bellotto's view of the ruins of the Kreuzkirche of Dresden, destroyed five years before by Prussian canons. But the bombings of the Franco-Prussian War and the devastations of the Commune inspired this genre, as did caricatures, like the *Paysage parisien* by Daumier, dated May 1871, and the catastrophic *veduta*, replaced now by a sensational photo, and stigmatized in a drawing published in the *Illustrated London News* of 1871.

The destiny of these burned monuments, considered for their picturesque value (which would bring about the publishing of sumptuous albums) and their didactic function (as political symbols fostered by the Third Republic) remained unsettled for a long time. It is in this context that Huysmans wrote a magnificent pamphlet, which would not displease the surrealists, and which brings us back to the theme of the anticipated ruin: *Le Musée des arts décoratifs et l'architecture cuite* (published in *Certains* in 1889). Breaking into the polemic around the evacuation of the ruins of the Conseil d'Etat and their replacement with a museum, Huysmans presents a diatribe against the fashion of the pastiche, aggravated by that project, and in its place pleads for the conservation of the ruins: "set fire to the disaggregate of this tiresome heap of stones ... instead of a terrible casern, one would have a demolished Roman palace, a Babel fantasy, an etching by Piranesi with its unfinished vaults, its lost arches, its galleries leading into air ... an entire architecture of dreams, an entire nightmare of abrupt columns, carved with an axe in the congestion of a mad sleep!" This Piranesian description of the ruins concludes: "To embellish this awful Paris," one should "spread here and there some ruins, burn the Bourse, the Madeleine, the Ministry of War, the Saint-Xavier Church, the Opéra, and the Odéon..." (One notices the resemblance between this catalogue of horrors and that suggested by Victor Hugo almost sixty years before.) "One will become aware that *fire* is the essential artist of our time and that, so pitiful when raw, the architecture of the century becomes tremendous, almost superb, when cooked."[21]

Though probably the most beautiful literary description of an anticipated ruin, this text is far from isolated; it is attached to a tradition that goes back to the eighteenth century. Certainly, up till now sufficient attention has not been paid to the narrow link between the development of futurology and that of archaeology. If we were to draw on the same diagram the exponential curves of the increase in publications about excavations on the one hand and of anticipatory literature on the other, I think we would notice a striking parallel, with a slight gap in time suggesting a jump from cause to effect.

In his remarkable and seldom quoted work on *La poésie de Paris dans la littérature française de Rousseau à Baudelaire*,[22] Pierre Citron tries to sort out the evocations of future ruins of Paris. His figures show well the link between this theme and the romantic period: he cites ninety texts in the lapse of 1830-1848. The phenomenon started well before, with Sebastien Mercier: one can find several descriptions of Paris or Versailles ruins in his *Tableau de Paris* (1781)[23] or in his novel *L'an 2440* (1775).[24] Valuable texts in this corpus list Balzac, Vigny, Lamartine, Gautier, Flaubert, and Hugo. The analysis is widened to cities other than Paris, recalling that in 1804 Chateaubriand imagined Saint Peter's in Rome in ruins, and that Madame de Staël did the same in 1807.

The anticipated ruin appears throughout all the arts and in several different cities. We recall, for instance, that the *Dernier homme* by Grainville,[25] published first in 1805 and imitated many times later, particularly by Mary Shelley, begins with a vision of the ruins of Palmyra, which the author never saw. The same is true of Grainville's literary model, the Count of Volney, author

12 P. Chasselar, frontispiece for Le dernier homme, *1832.*
13 P. Martini, frontispiece for Les ruines *by Volney, 1792.*
14 Frontispiece for A. Franklin, Les ruines de Paris en 4875, *1875.*
15 A. Deroy, L'hôtel de ville.

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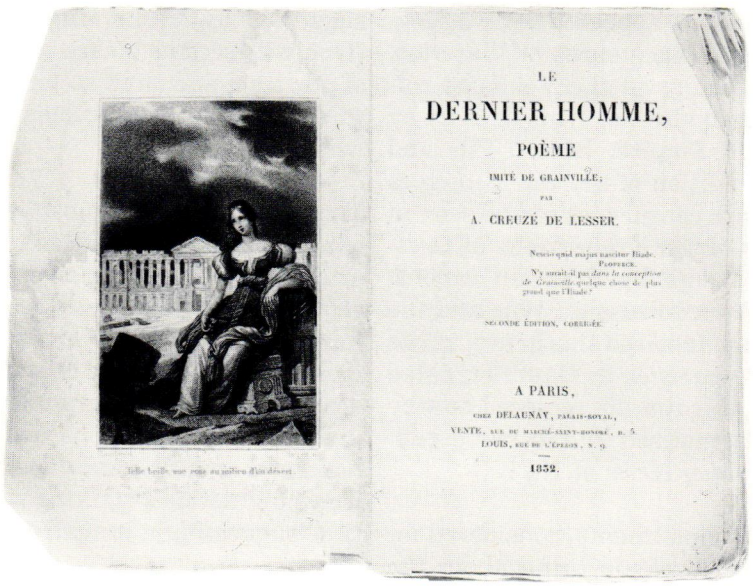


LE

DERNIER HOMME,

POÈME

IMITÉ DE GRAINVILLE;

PAR

A. CREUZÉ DE LESSER.

Nescio quid majus nascitur Iliade.
POMPEIUS.

N'y aurait-il pas *dans la conception de Grainville* quelque chose de plus grand que l'Iliade?

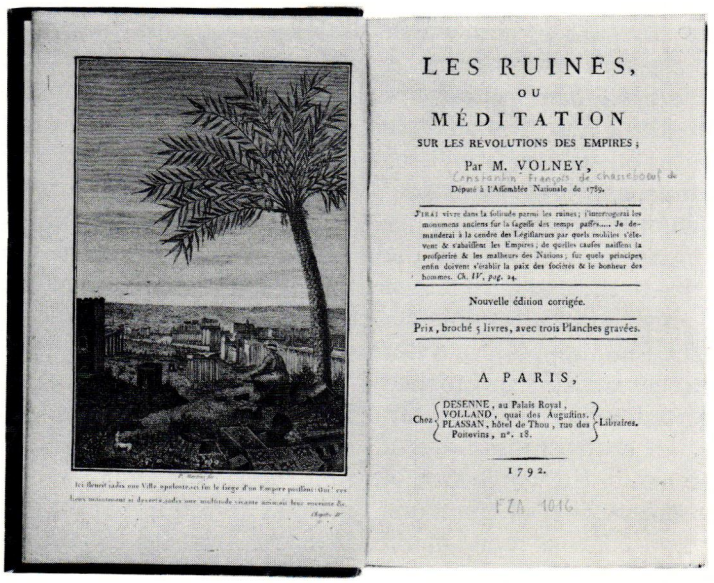
SECONDE ÉDITION, CORRIGÉE.

A PARIS,

CHEZ DELAUNAY, PALAIS-ROYAL,
VENTE, RUE DU MARCHÉ-SAINT-HONORÉ, N. 5.
LOUIS, RUE DE L'ÉPERON, N. 9.

1832.

12



LES RUINES,

OU

MÉDITATION

SUR LES RÉVOLUTIONS DES EMPIRES;

Par M. VOLNEY,

Député à l'Assemblée Nationale de 1789.

J'irai vivre dans la solitude parmi les ruines; j'interrogerai les monuments anciens sur la tagelle des temps passés.... Je demanderai à la cendre des Législateurs par quels mobiles s'élèvent & s'abaissent les Empires; de quelles causes naissent la prospérité & les malheurs des Nations; sur quels principes seront fondés s'établir la paix des sociétés & le bonheur des hommes. *Ch. IV, pag.* 24.

Nouvelle édition corrigée.

Prix, broché 5 livres, avec trois Planches gravées.

A PARIS,

Chez { DESENNE, au Palais Royal, / VOLLAND, quai des Augustins, / PLASSAN, hôtel de Thou, rue des Poitevins, n°. 18. } Libraires.

1792.

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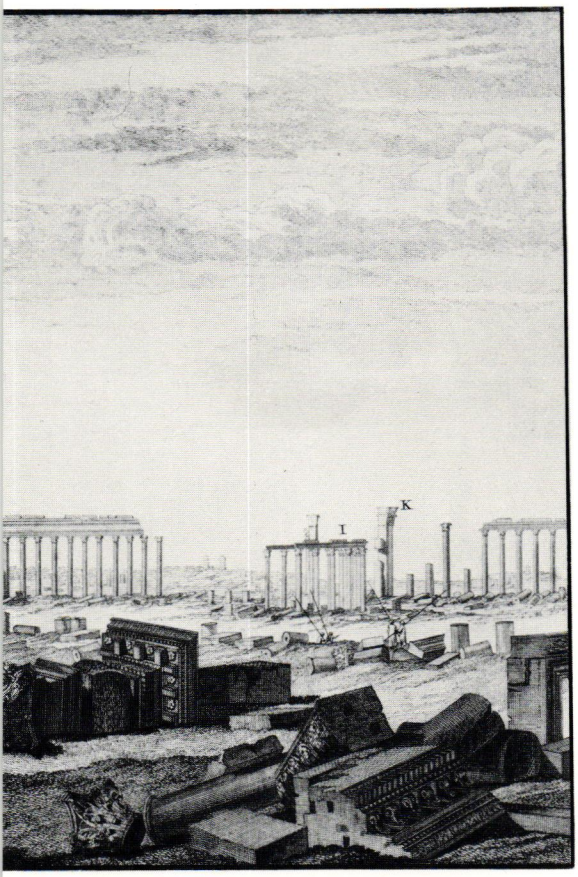

of *Les ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (1791).[26] On the frontispiece the Count contemplates the ruins of Palmyra, the subject of his famous luminary invocation. Modern biographers of Volney confirm that he could not have seen Palmyra while traveling to the East, and that he knew the ruins only from the prints of the English archaeologist Robert Wood.[27] The prestige of Wood's publication was so great that one finds allusions to the ruins of Palmyra throughout the nineteenth century, which would incarnate, in the eyes of the Westerners, a chronological and geographical exoticism. In his analysis of the myth of the future destruction of Paris, Paul Citron compares Paris with great, destroyed cities of the past. His study shows that to Biblical references (Sodom and Gomorrah) or classical ones (Rome, Athens, Carthage, Herculaneum, Pompeii), one can add in a constant progression more remote sites, as they were discovered by the archaeological travelers: Thebes, Memphys, Tyre, Sidon, Baalbek, Palmyra, Babylon, Nineveh, Persepolis, Susa, and more. The constant recurrence of the future archaeologist in anticipatory fiction gives us another clue: after Mercier, one has a *topos*, which leads to Charles Garnier, who said that he put lyres everywhere in his Opéra to enlighten future diggers about the function of his building. Once more, the imaginary futurist is nourished by the projection of the past into the future.

Where can we find a better portrait of a society than in its utopias, which reveal at the same time its ideals and fears? How could we not recognize ourselves in this portrait? It seems obvious that many elements of history extended into the twentieth century were torn between modernism and the past, subjected to the same search for identity, to the same cultural *malaise*. The obsessed prisoner of the myth of evolution, man tries to see his future in the past, as in a rearview mirror. Albert Speer's theory of the beauty of ruins or Max Ernst's dead cities, beyond their ideological differences, echo Hubert Robert's fantasies, just as Valéry echoed Volney in his famous text of 1919, *The Spiritual Crisis*, and which begins, "We civilizations now know we are mortal."[28] Science fiction and anticipatory literature, the

 fashion of the cinema of catastrophe, the sending of messages to the inhabitants of other planets, are signs of an extension of the distance that first appeared at the time of romanticism; one finds the same distance in the present, in the ethnology of our own culture. The renaissance of contemporary and historical eclecticism and the renewal of ruinism — is not all this a proof that history still is, even today, our *mal du siècle?*

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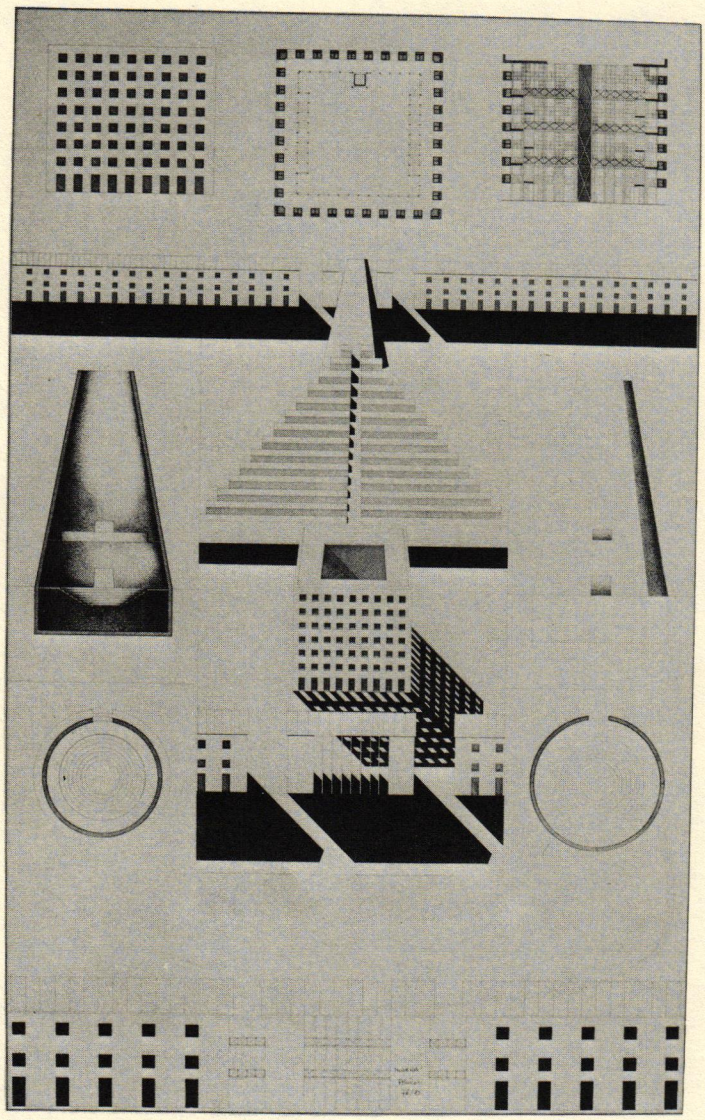
Aldo Rossi



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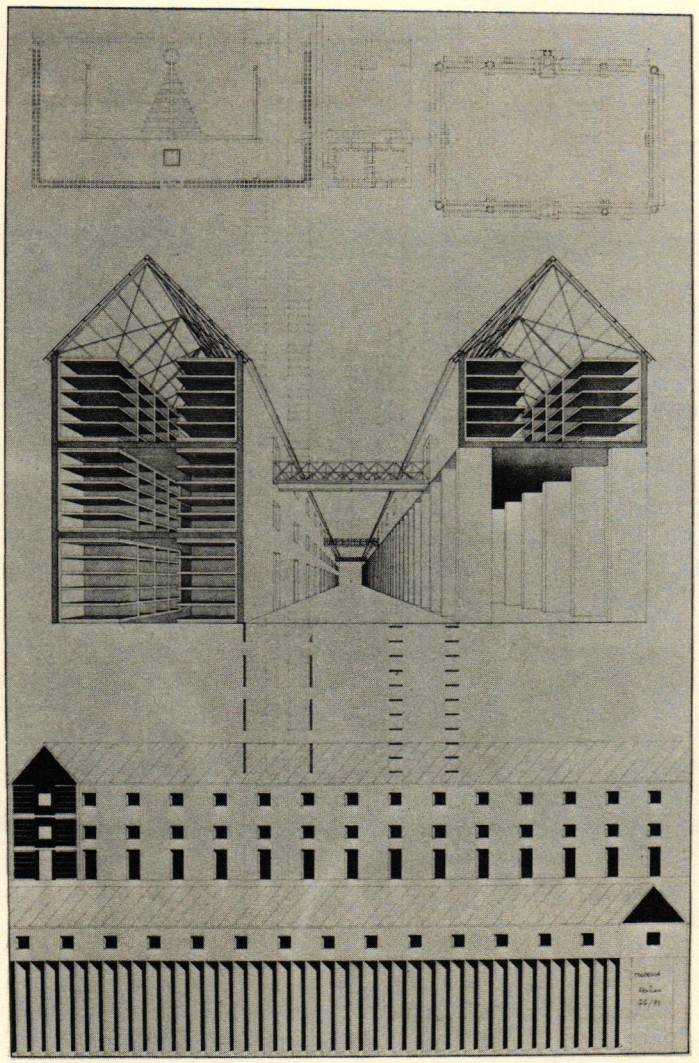

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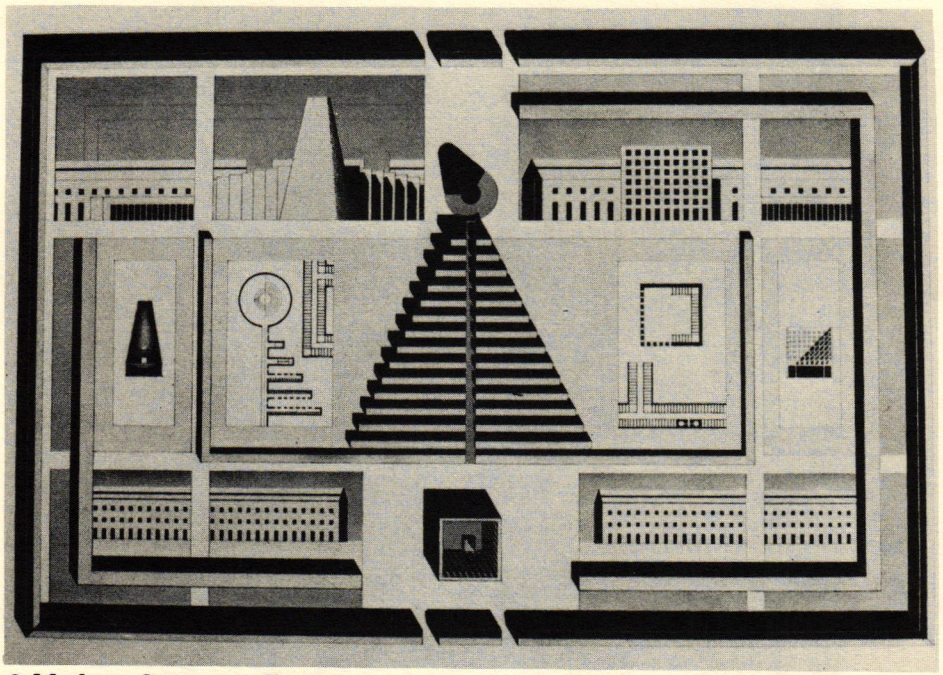
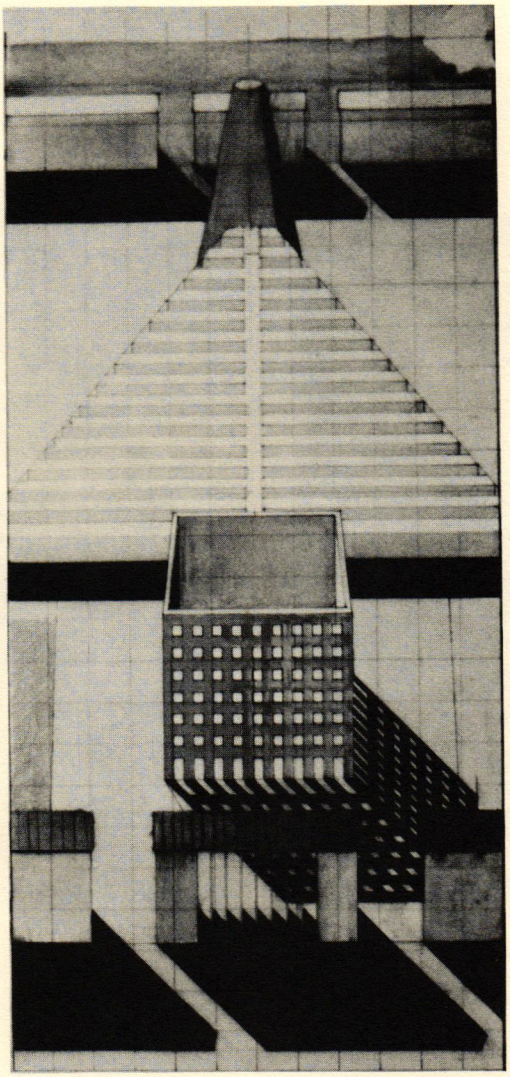
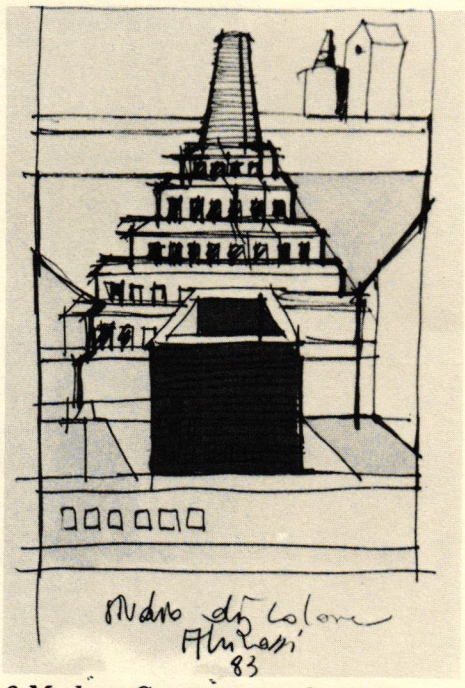


3 Modena Cemetery, Il gioco dell'oca, *1983*.

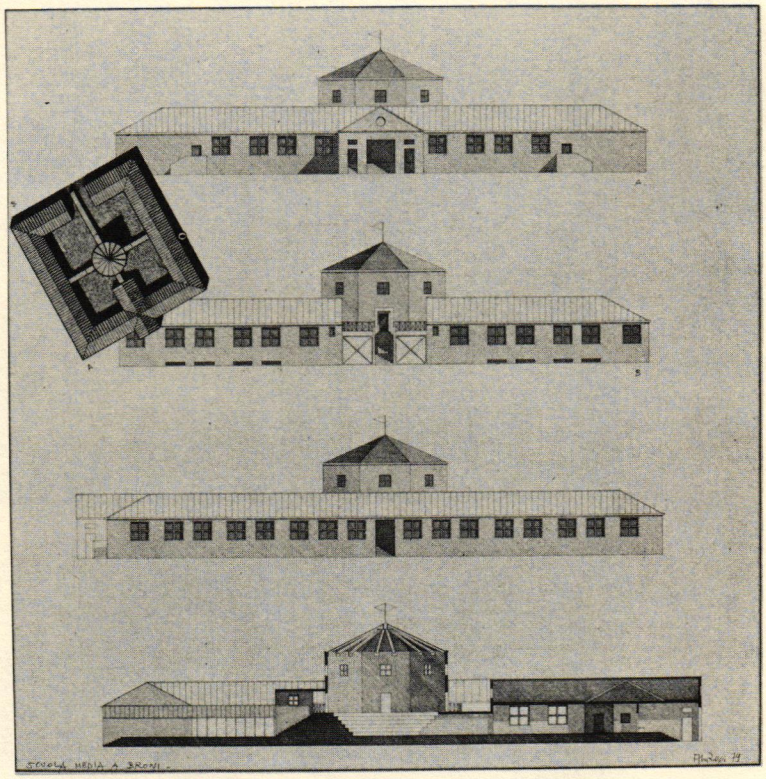


4 Modena Cemetery, 1982.

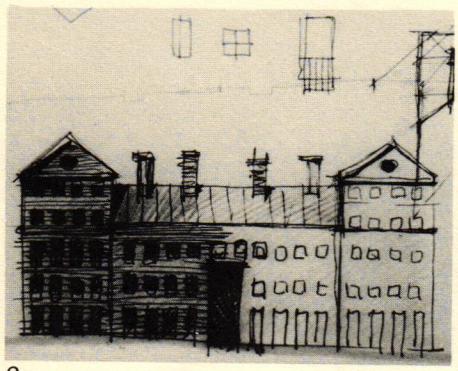
5 Modena Cemetery, study, 1983.



6 Modena Cemetery, study, 1983.



7 Middle School at Broni, 1983.



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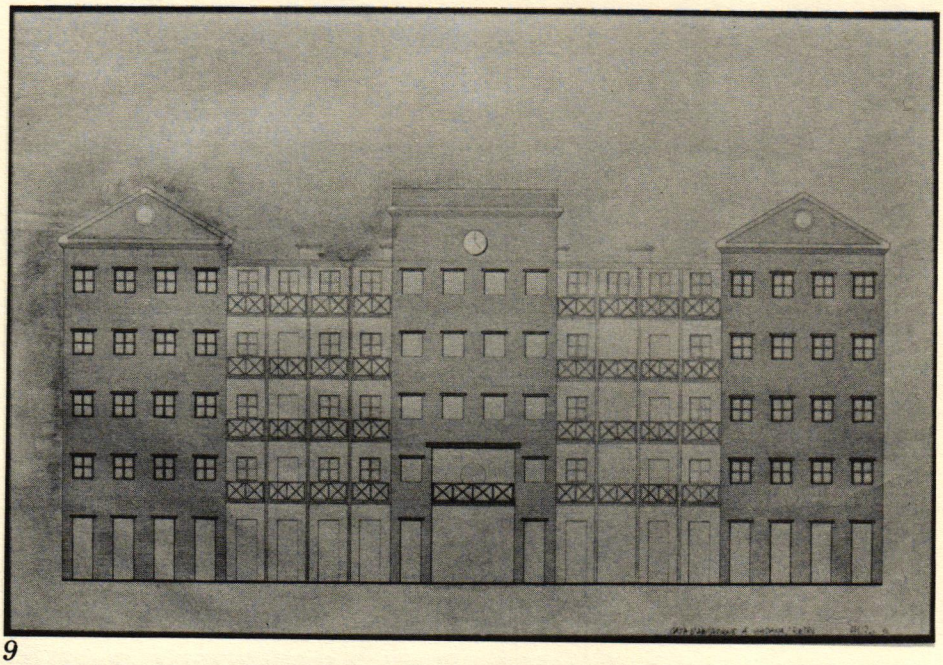
8 House at Viadana, study, 1982.
9 House at Viadana, rear facade, 1983.
10 House at Viadana, front facade, 1983.
11 Assembly Hall at Milan, study, 1982.



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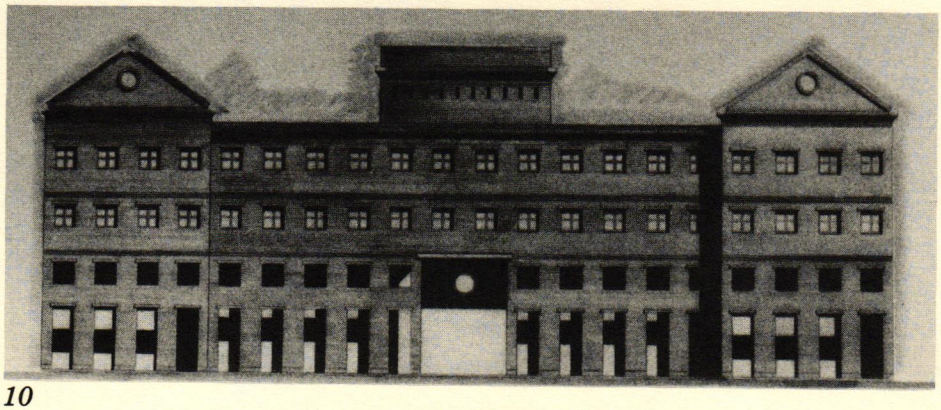

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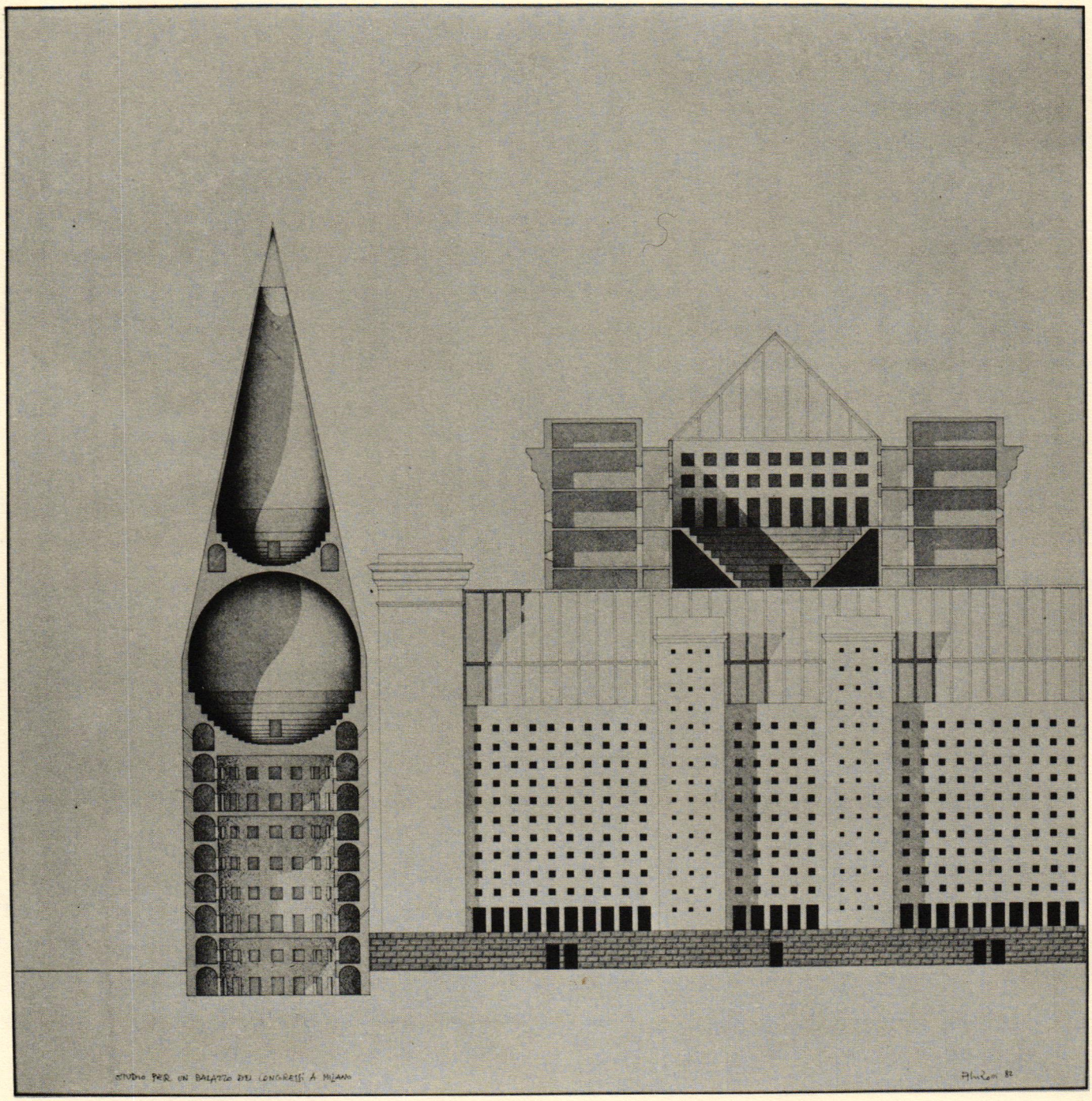

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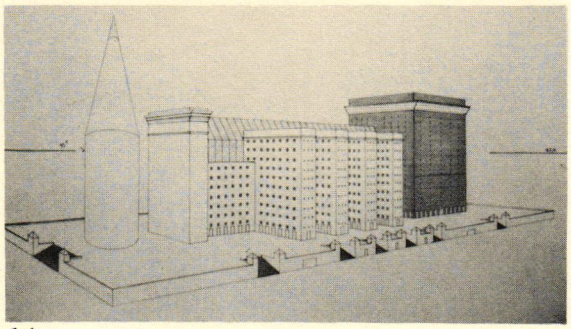
12 Assembly Hall at Milan, study, 1982.
13 Assembly Hall at Milan, plan, 1982.
14 Assembly Hall at Milan, perspective, 1982.
15 Assembly Hall at Milan, study, 1982.



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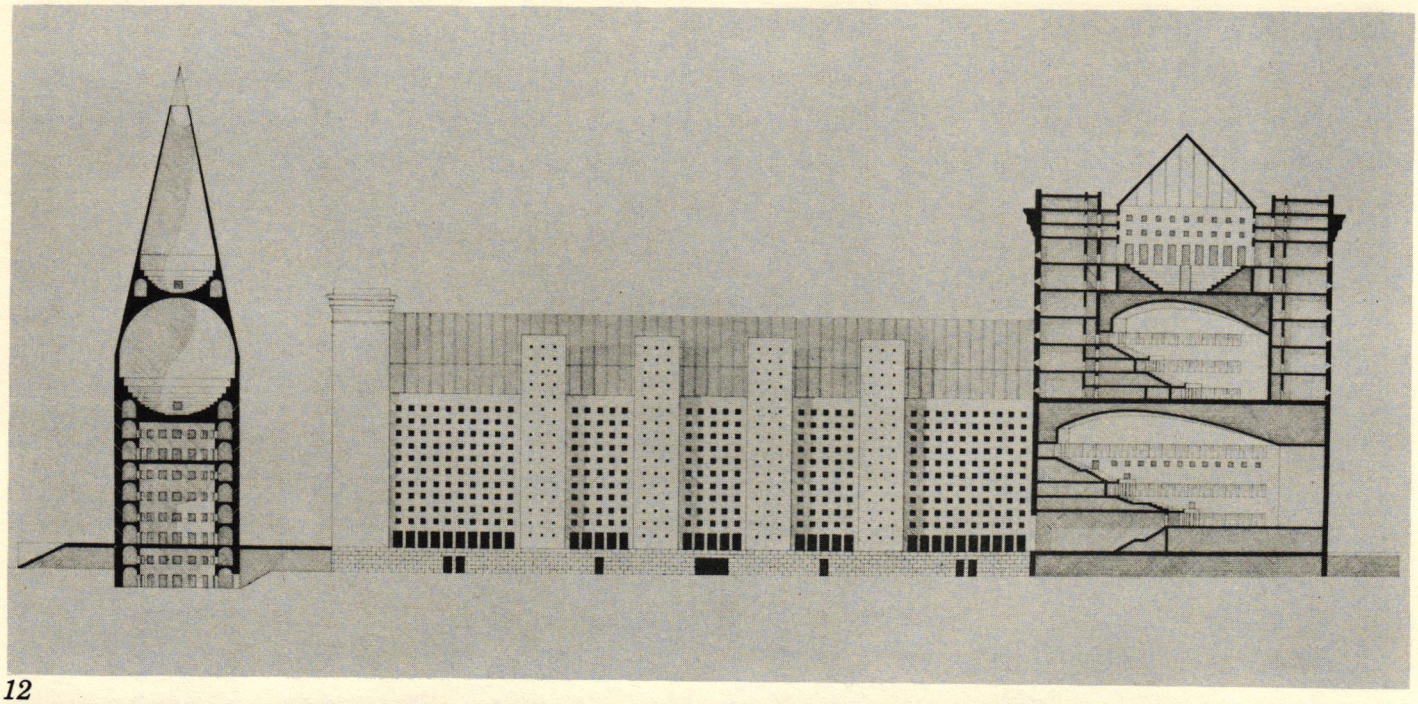

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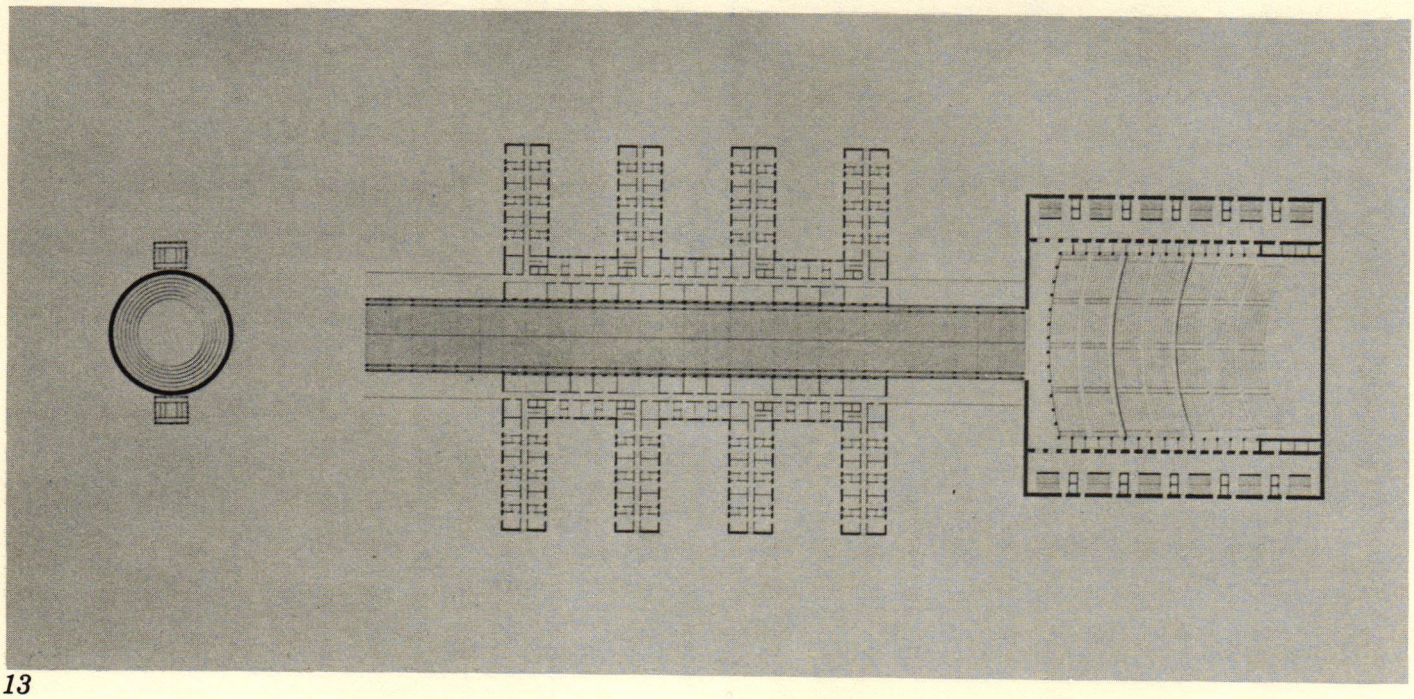

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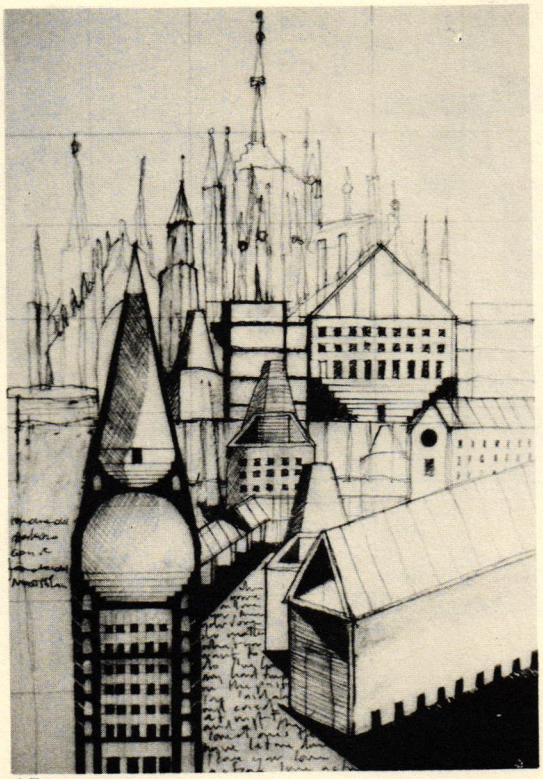

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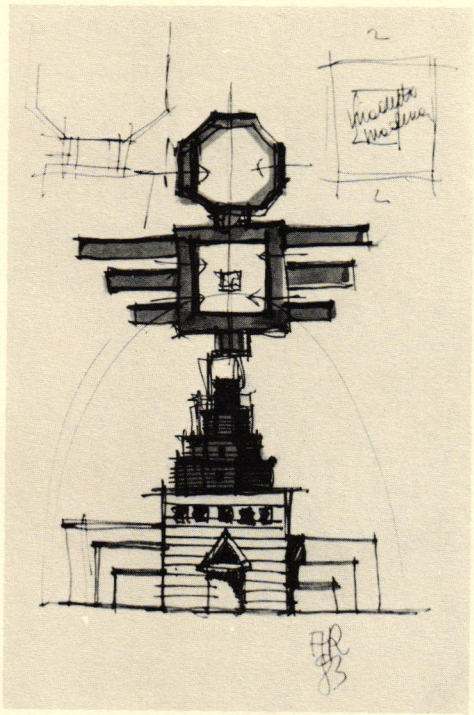
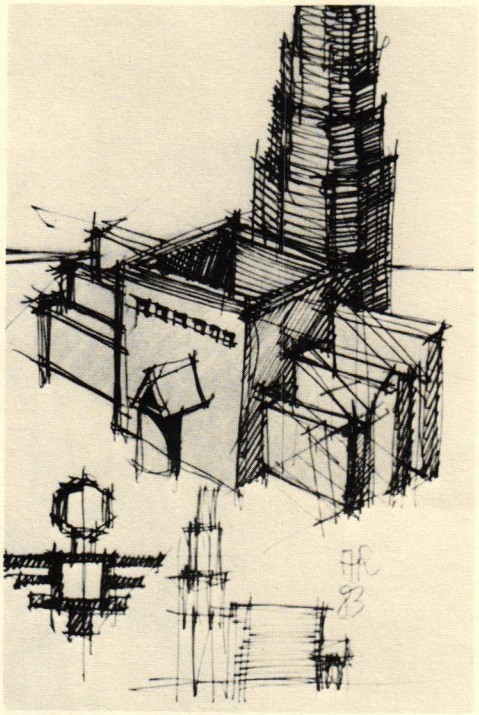
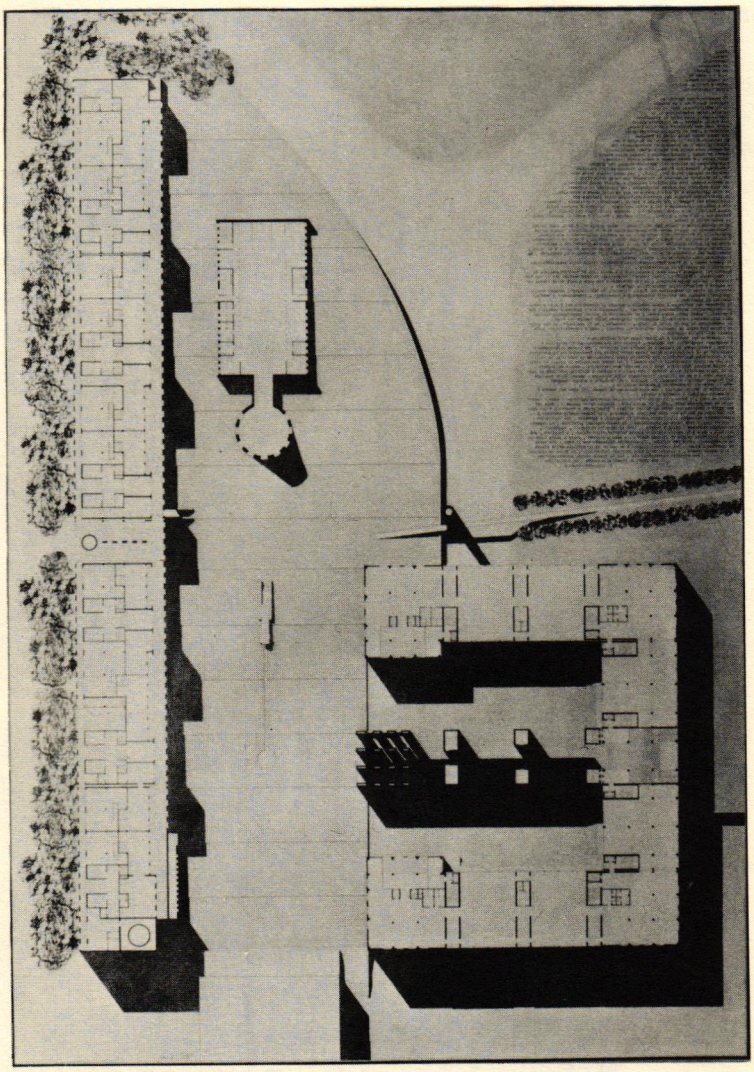


16 La Macchina Modenese, *1983*.

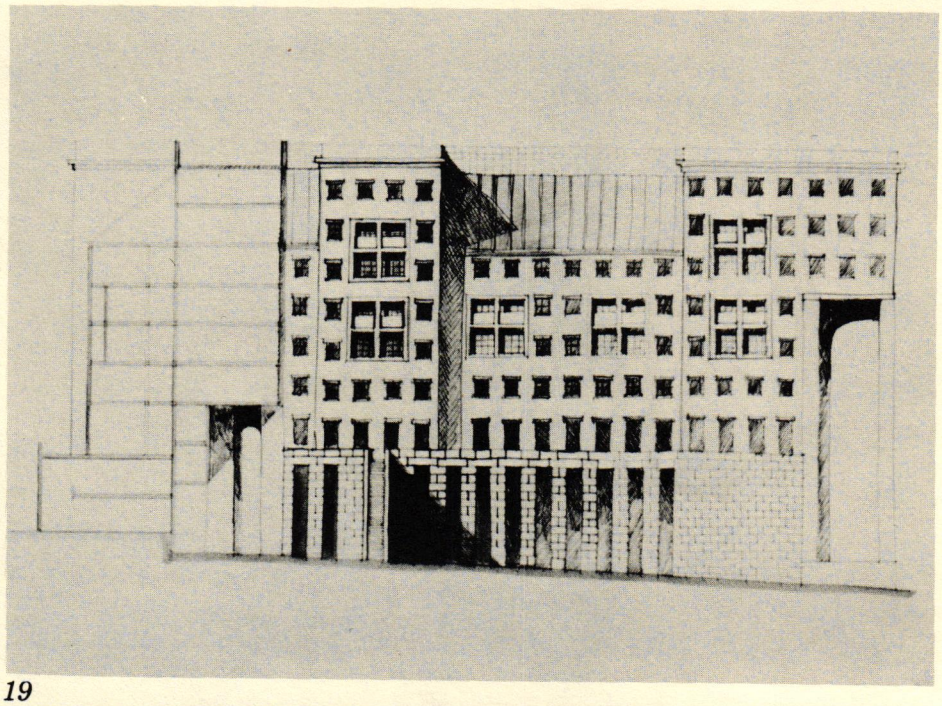


17 La Macchina Modenese, *1983*.



18 Project for the settlement of the Fontivegge area at Perugia, plan, 1982.

78 *19 Residential building, Fontivegge, Perugia, study, 1982.*
20 Residential building, Fontivegge, Perugia, elevation detail, 1982.
21 Project for the settlement of the Fontivegge area at Perugia, study, 1983.



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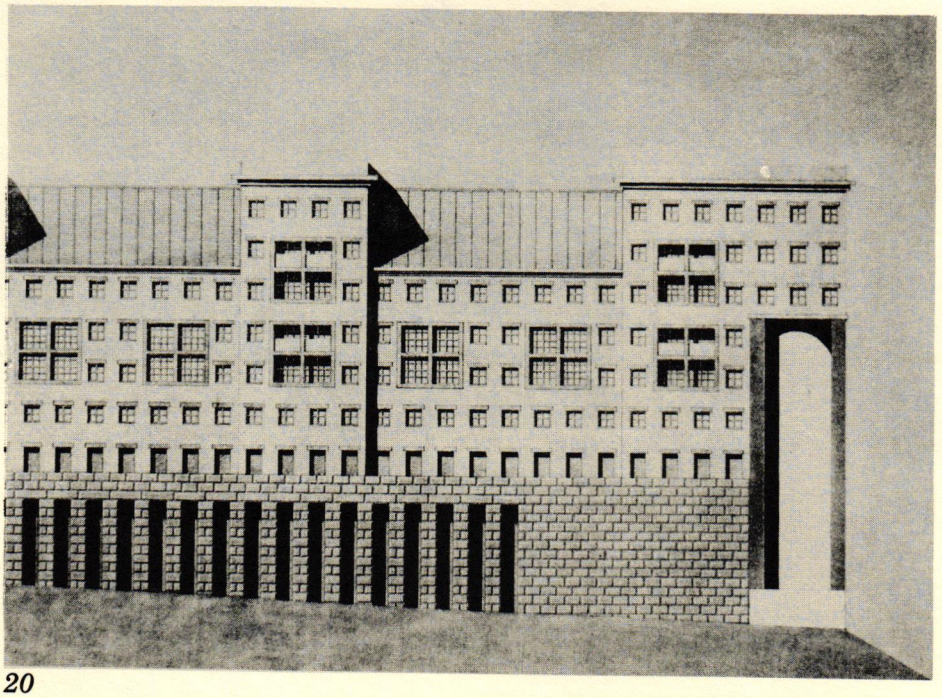

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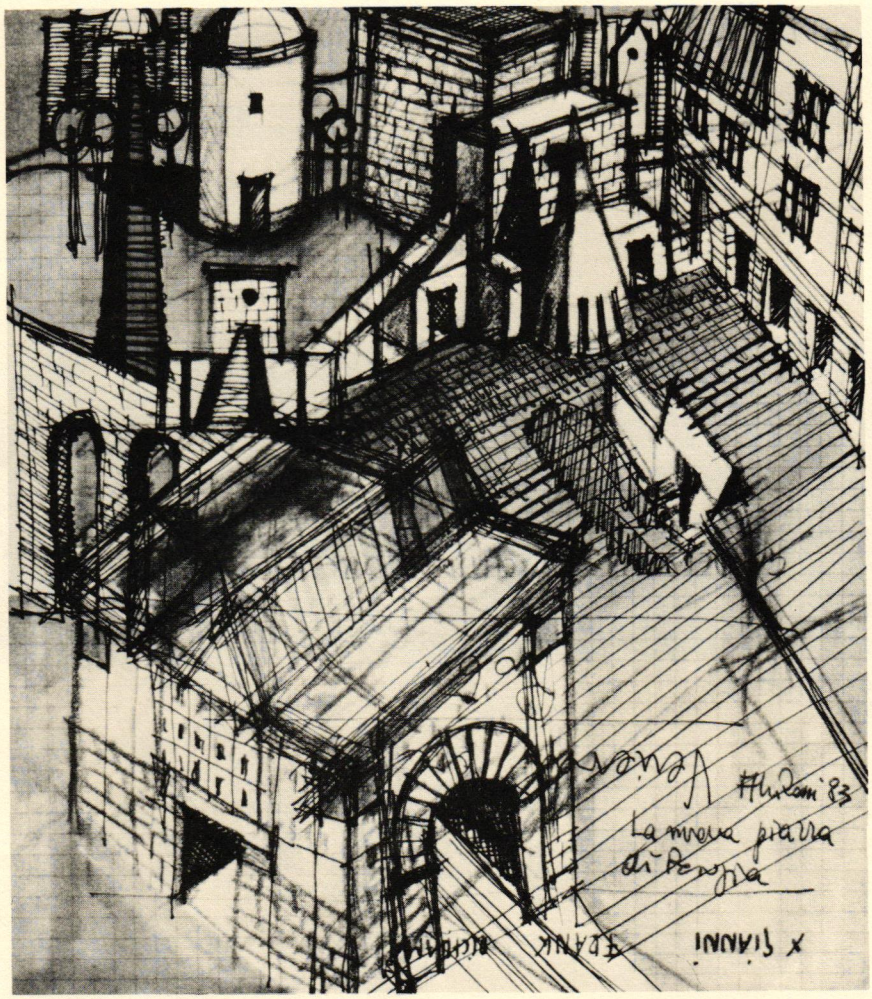

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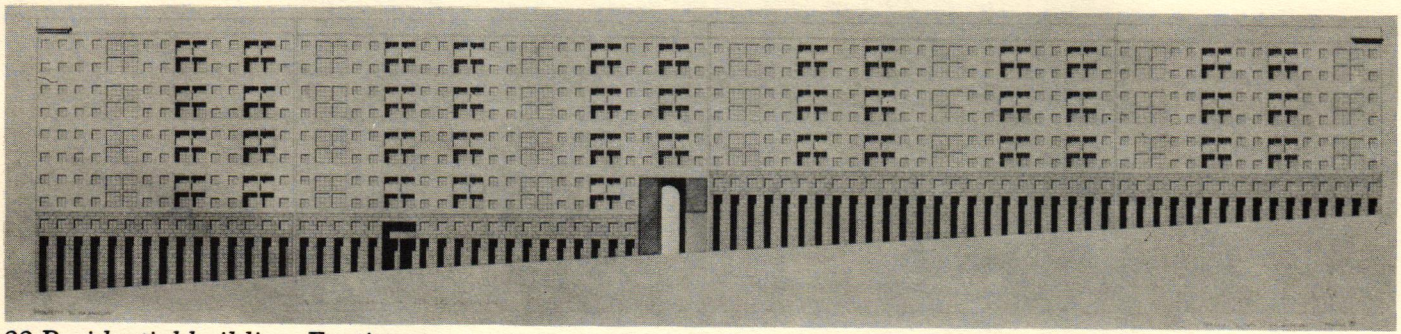
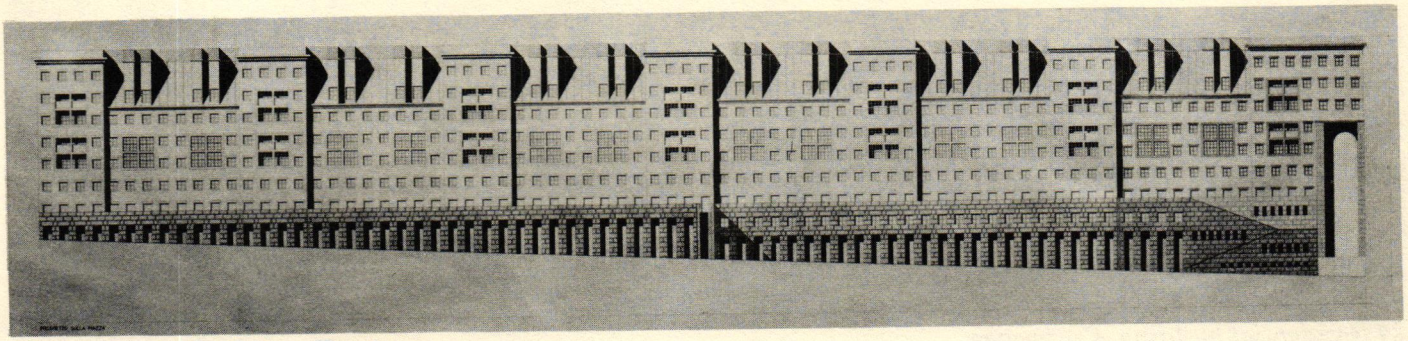
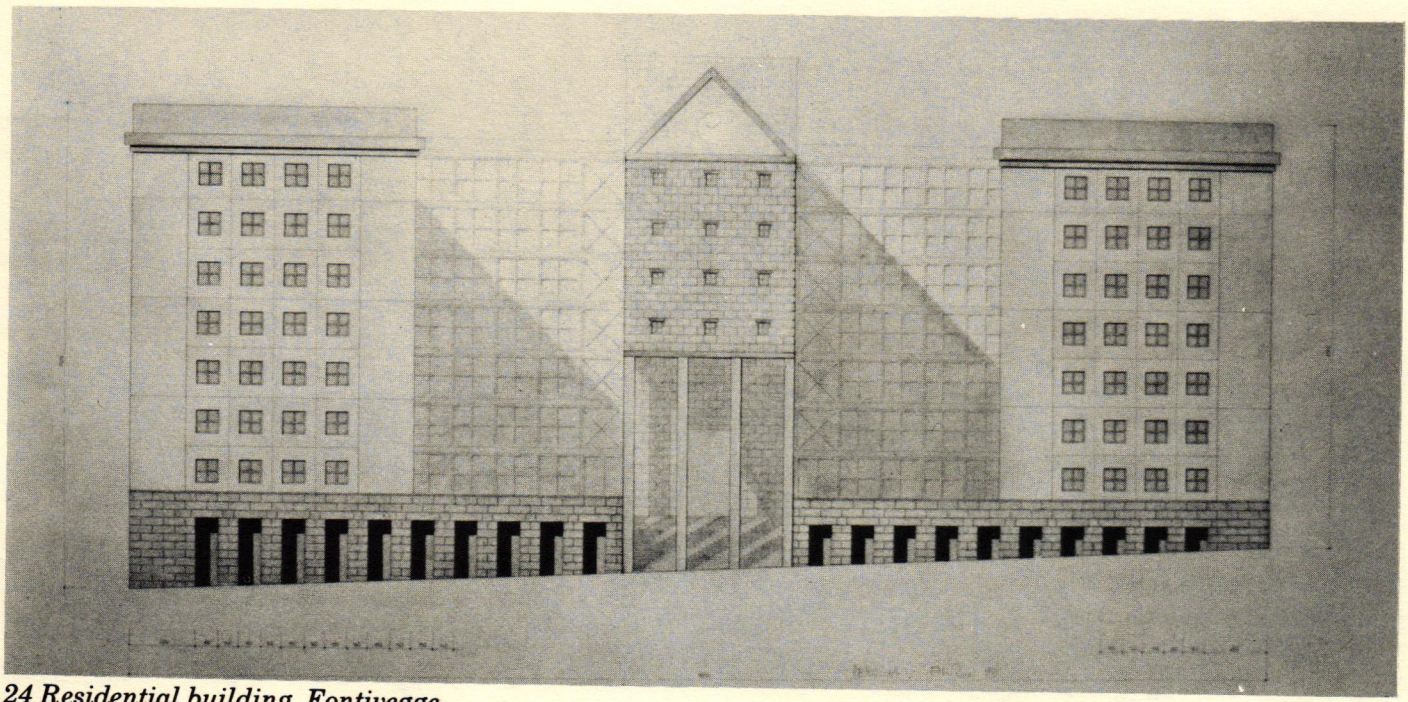


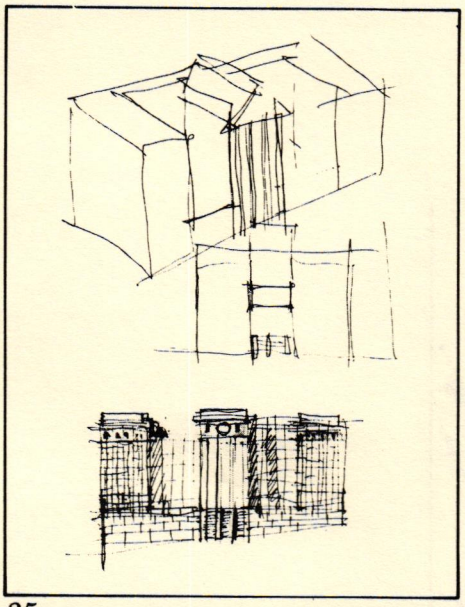
22 Residential building, Fontivegge, Perugia, elevation, 1983.



23 Residential building, Fontivegge, Perugia, elevation, 1983.



24 Residential building, Fontivegge, Perugia, elevation, 1982.



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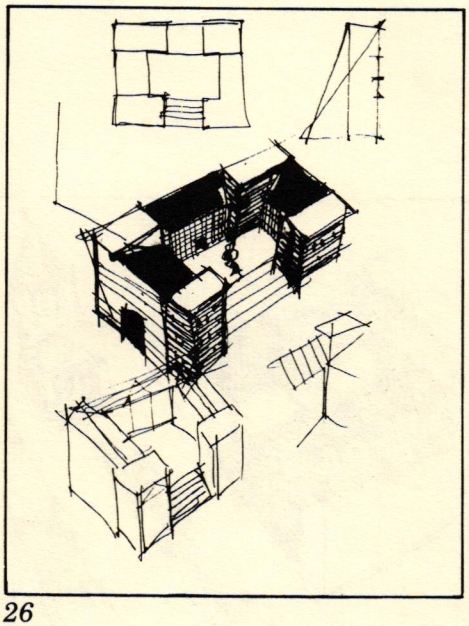

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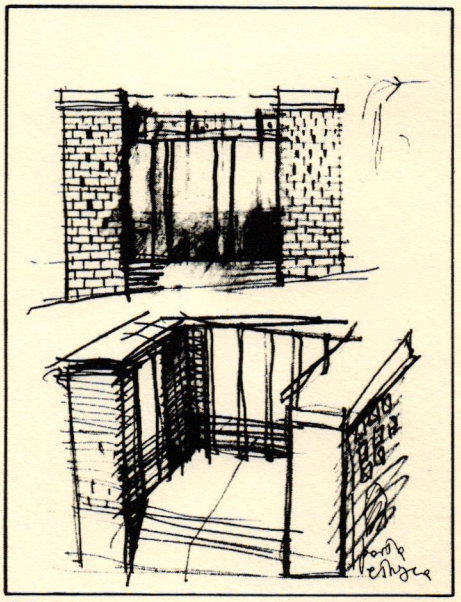

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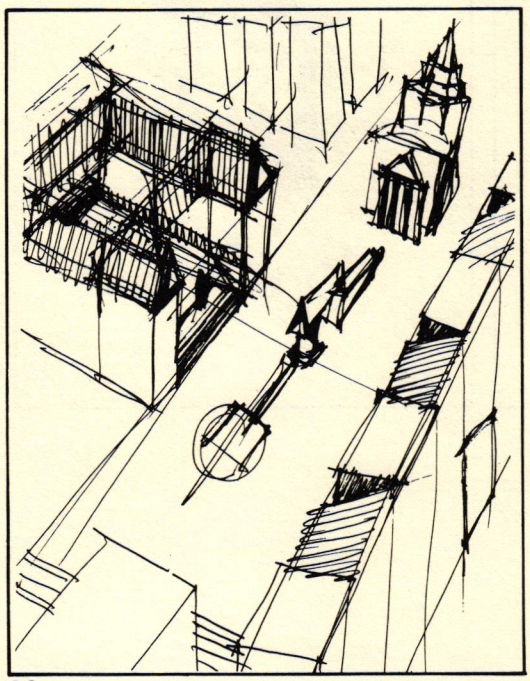
25-43 Perugia, studies.



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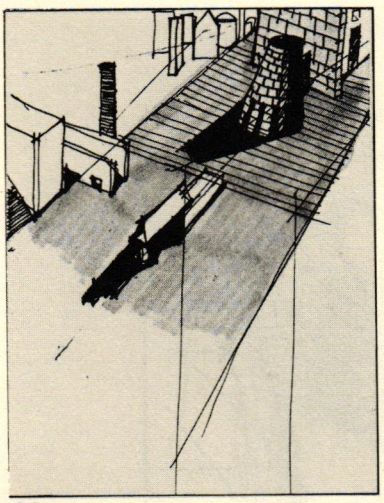

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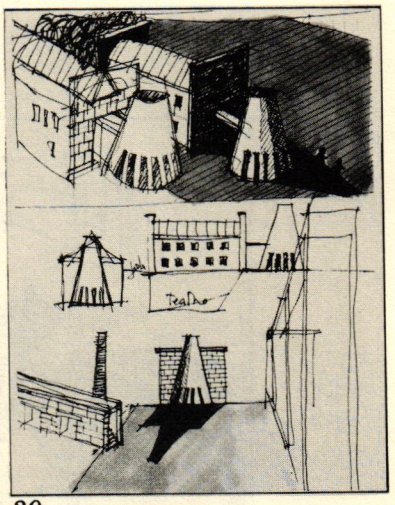

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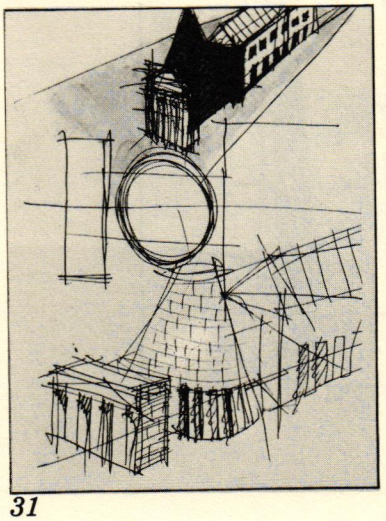

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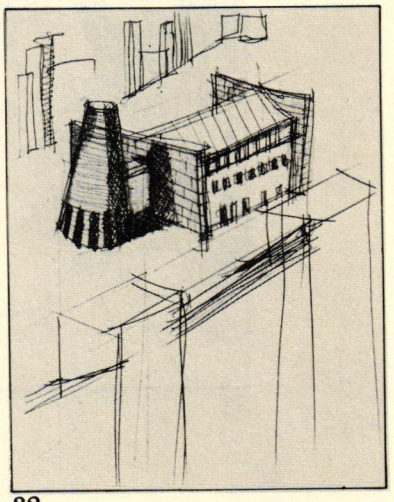

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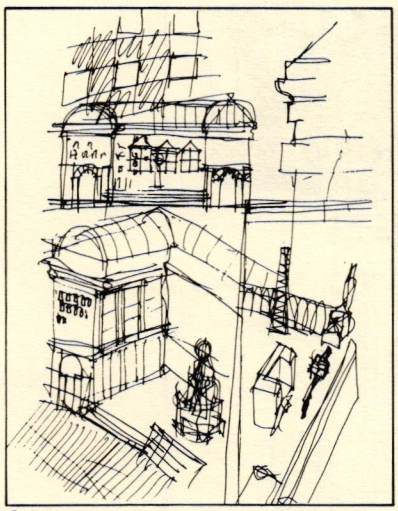

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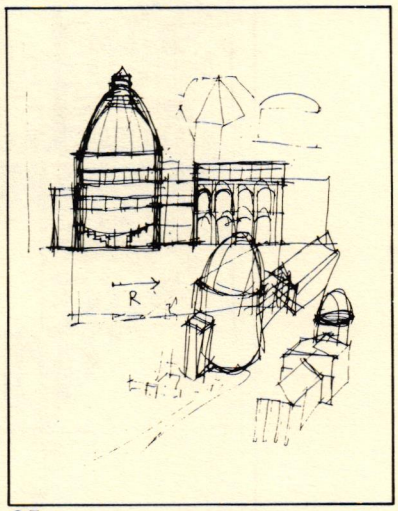

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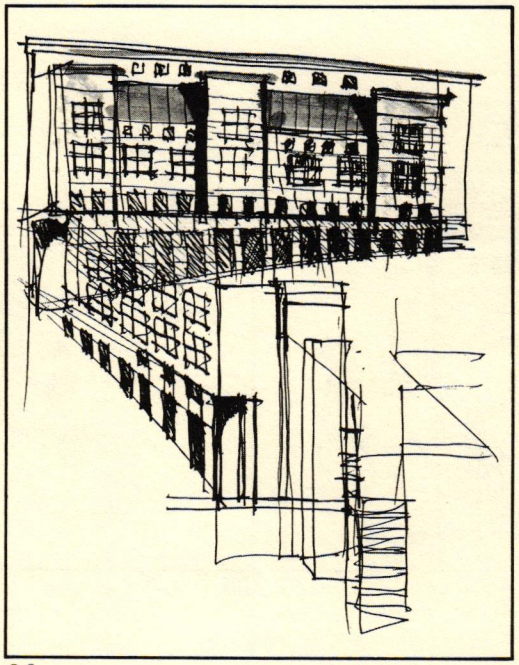

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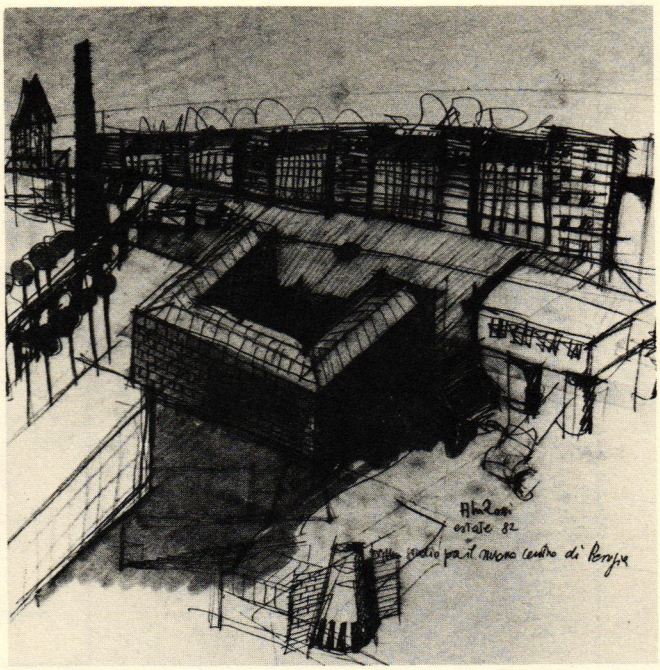

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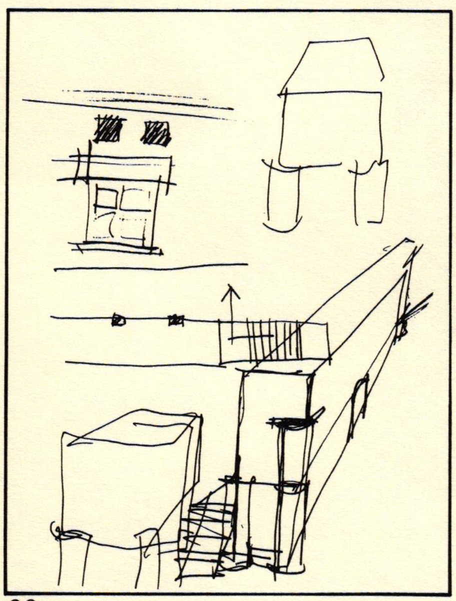

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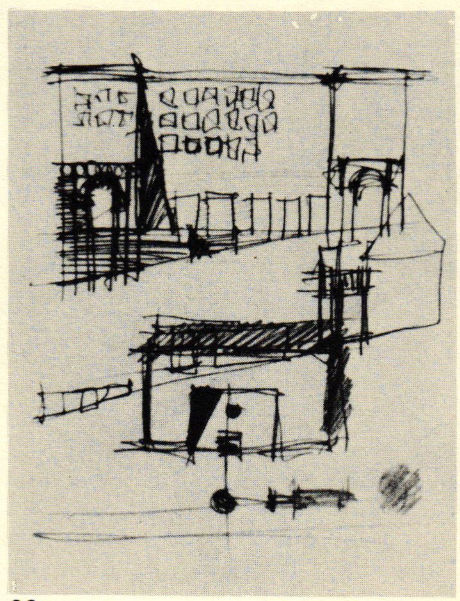

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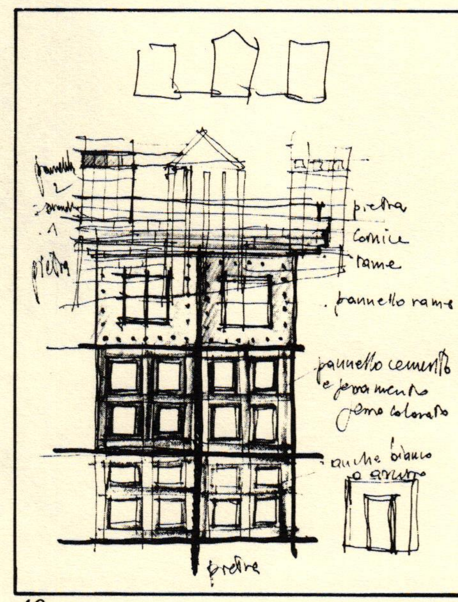
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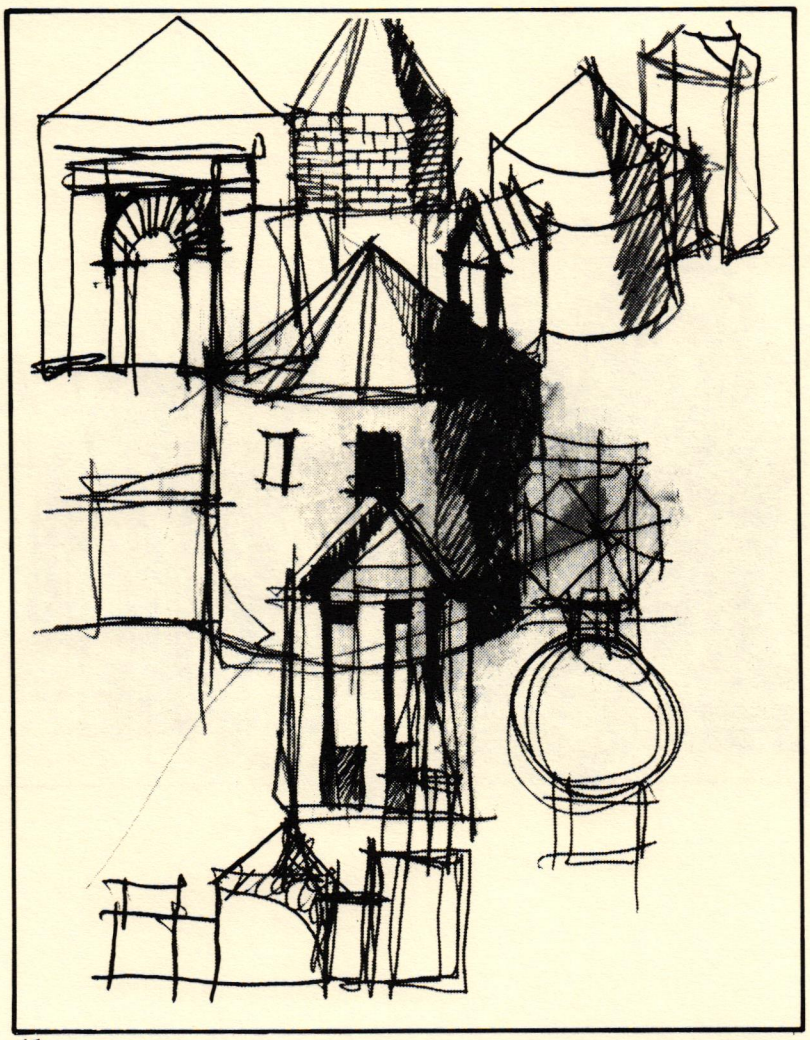

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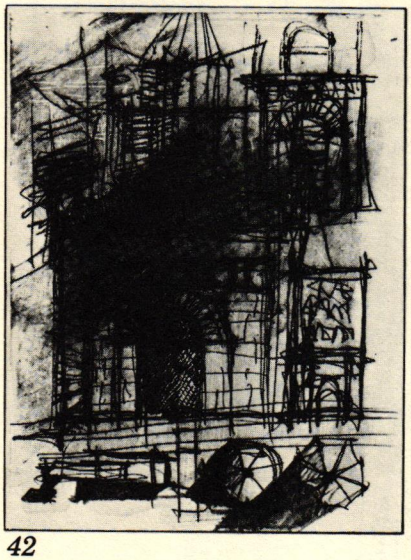

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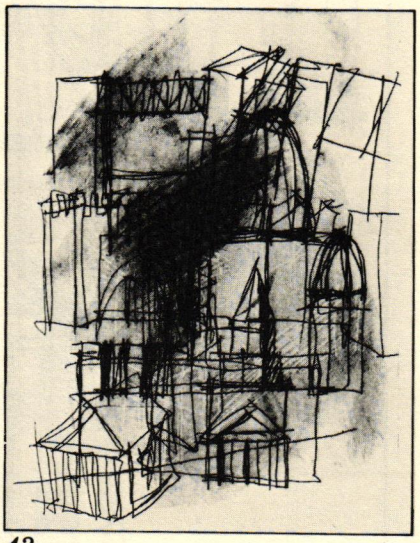

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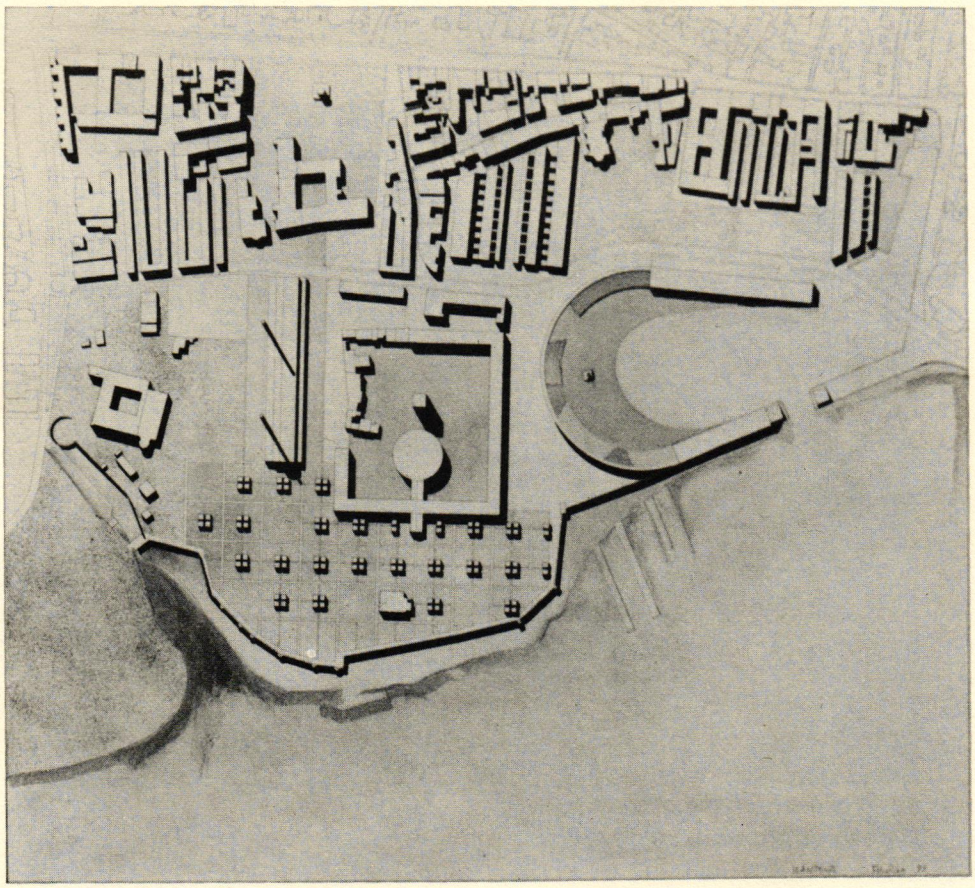
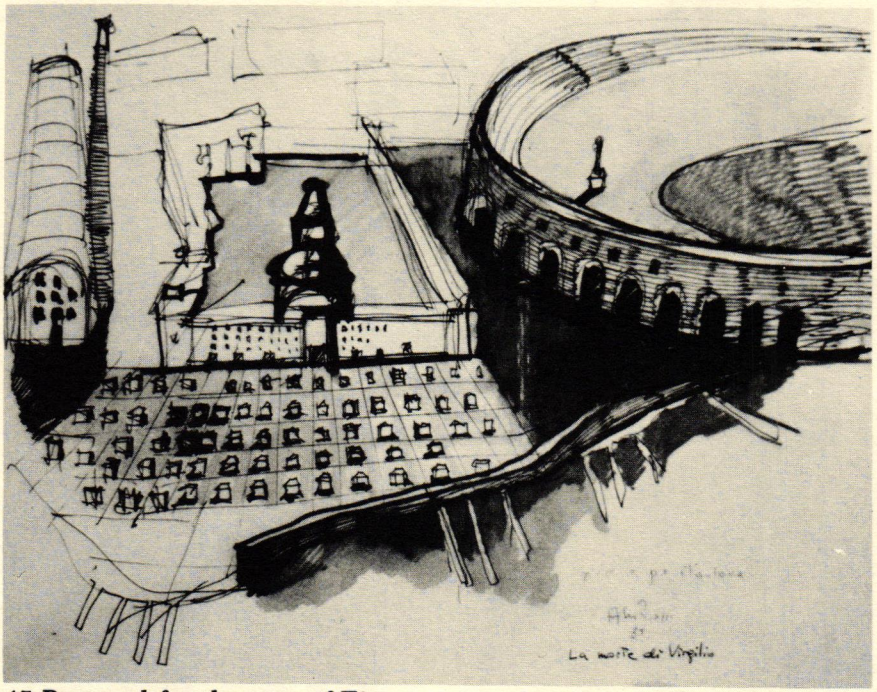
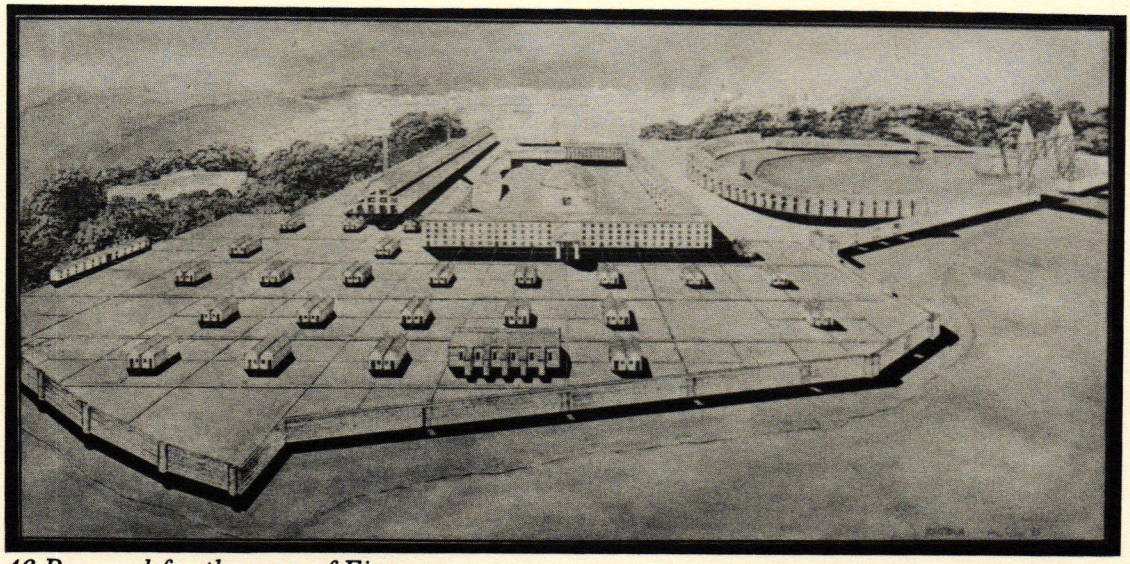


44 Proposal for the area of Fiera Catena at Mantua, plan, 1982



45 Proposal for the area of Fiera Catena at Mantua, study, 1982.



46 Proposal for the area of Fiera Catena at Mantua, persective, 1982.

Special thanks to
Aldo Rossi
and to the staff
of the Graduate
School of Design,
Harvard University.

The Stones of the Void

Francesco Dal Co

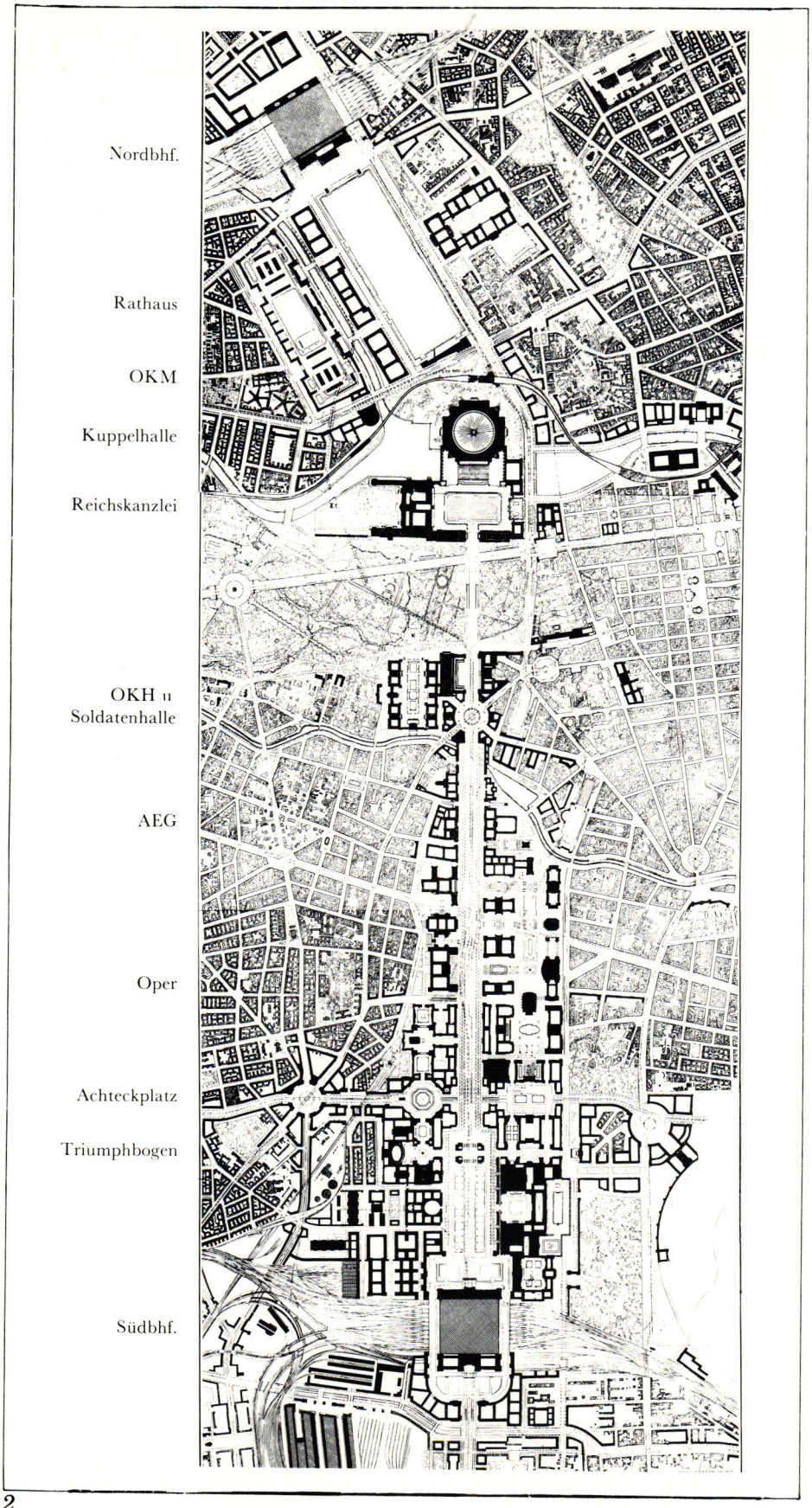
1 Convention Hall for the Reichsparteitag-Gelande, Nuremberg. Albert Speer.

In a striking passage from *La violence et le sacré*, René Girard points out a fundamental similarity between "the ideology of ritual cannibalism" and the "nationalistic and warrior myths of the modern world." "In both cases," observes Girard, "the essential function of the foreign war and of the more or less spectacular rites that often accompany it lies in preserving the equilibrium and tranquility of the essential communities, warding off the threat of an openly discussed and practiced violence."[1]

If we put aside our preoccupation with investigating historical developments so as to understand their points of continuity with past experiences, perhaps we can apply Girard's hypothesis to isolate a characteristic of Nazi architecture. This should not be taken as an implicit and indiscriminate denial of the importance that historical continuity assumes in German culture after 1933. Indeed, there is little doubt as to the attempt made by Nazi propaganda and by the intellectual circles close to the party to present the regime as the direct heir to the tradition of conservative and nationalistic thought, whose roots took shape between the mid-1800s and the first decades of our century. This should not, in turn, lead us to favor an historiographical approach reflecting such a tendency; in the case of Nazi architecture, reliance on the circularity of historical "returns" can prove misleading.

The apparent homogeneity of architecture during the Nazi period was only partially the result of the maturation of conservative and nationalistic ideas first articulated between 1800 and 1900. A greater cause of homogeneity was the forced reconciliation of the conflicting tensions that upheld Nazi thought; this reconciliation was without the impetus, however, to prefigure a single embodiment of itself in the architecture of the time. The tensions began and ended with the modern crisis, and embodied a program aimed at rebuilding the architectural discipline — a program which, in favoring the recuperation of a common tradition derived from the genuinely national characteristics of art and planning, assumed political goals. This is made evident in one of

100 *2 Plan for the Reconstruction of Berlin; north-south axis. Albert Speer with Adolf Hitler, 1937-1938.*



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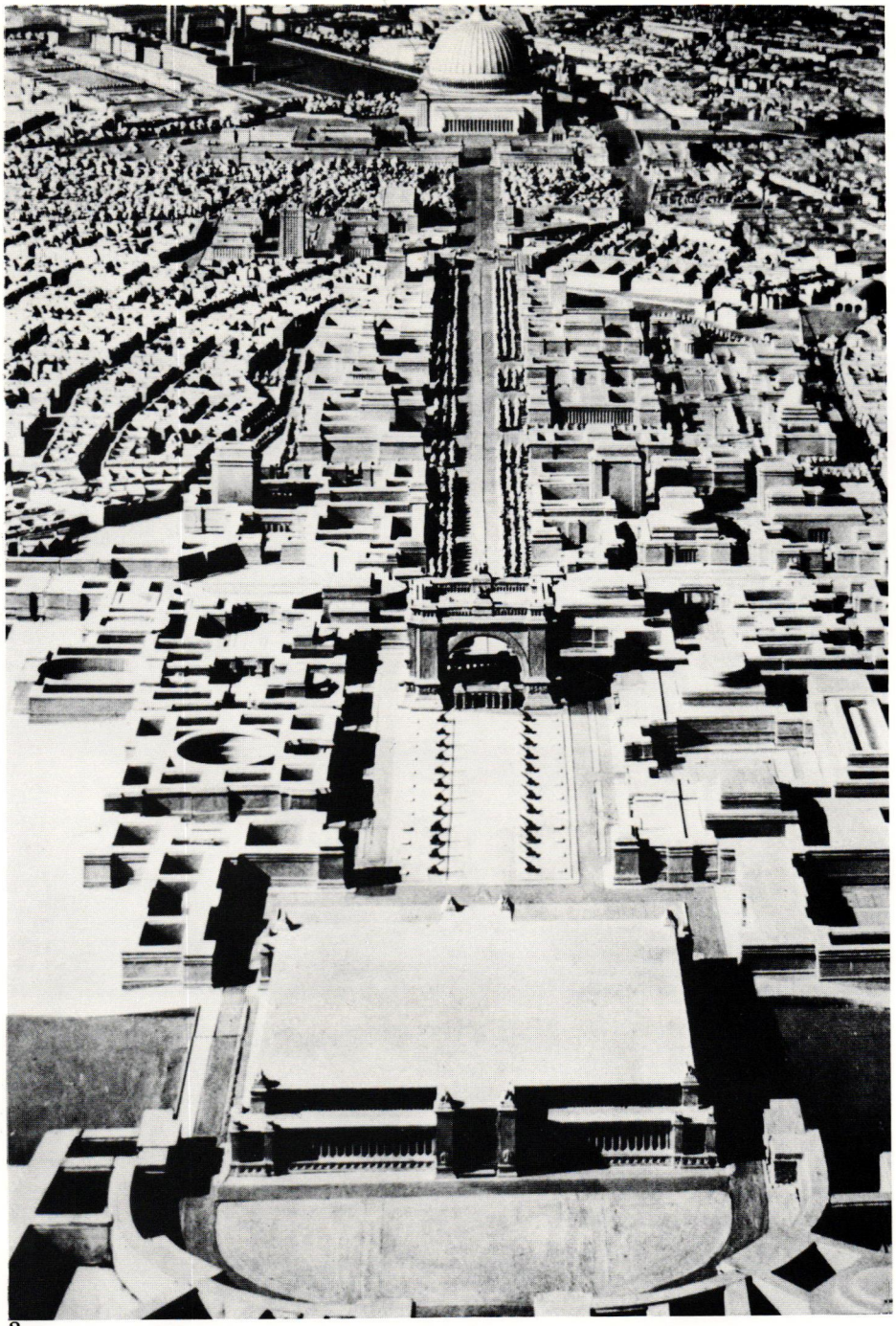

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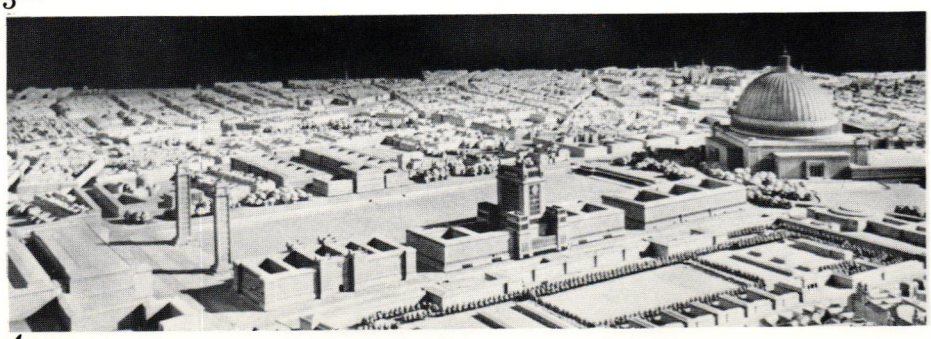

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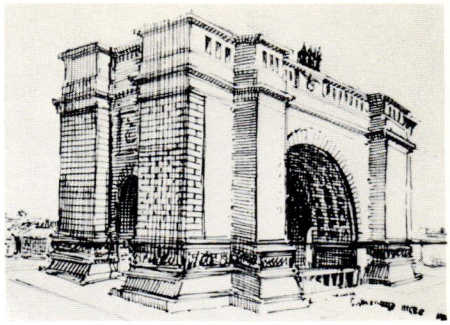

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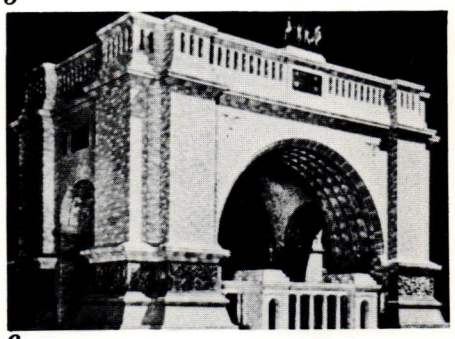

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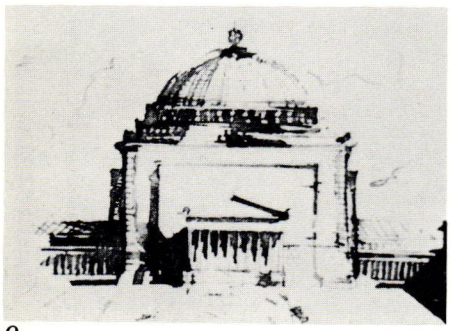
3 Plan for the Reconstruction of Berlin, model. Albert Speer with Adolf Hitler, 1937-1938.

4 Berlin, model. View showing North Station and Great Hall.

5 Arch of Triumph, Berlin, project. Sketch by Adolf Hitler, 1925.

6 Arch of Triumph, model.



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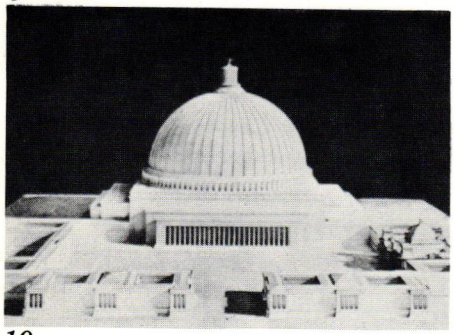

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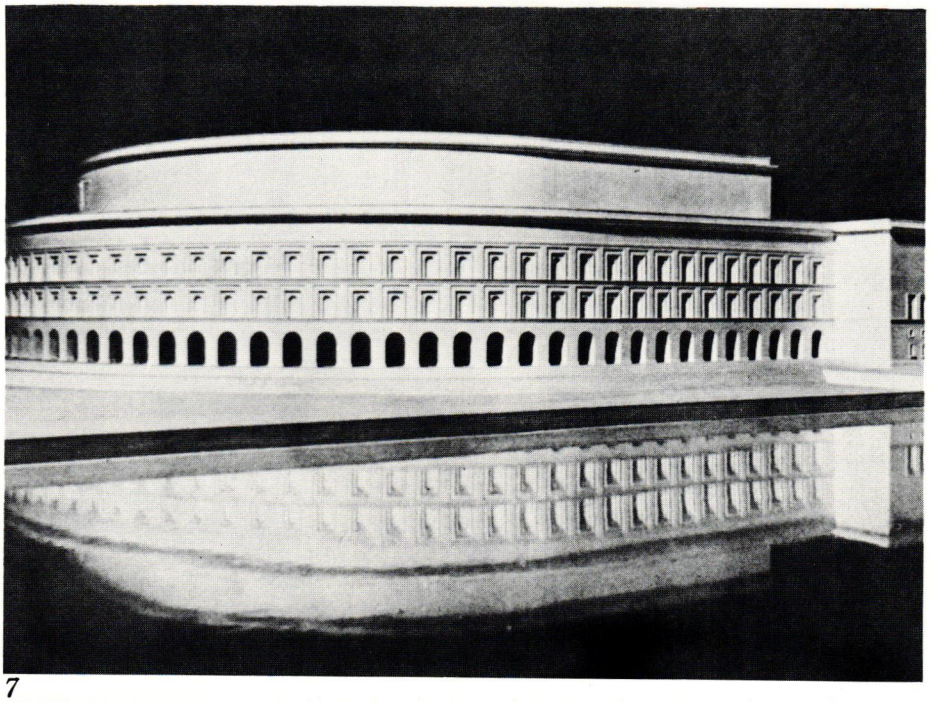

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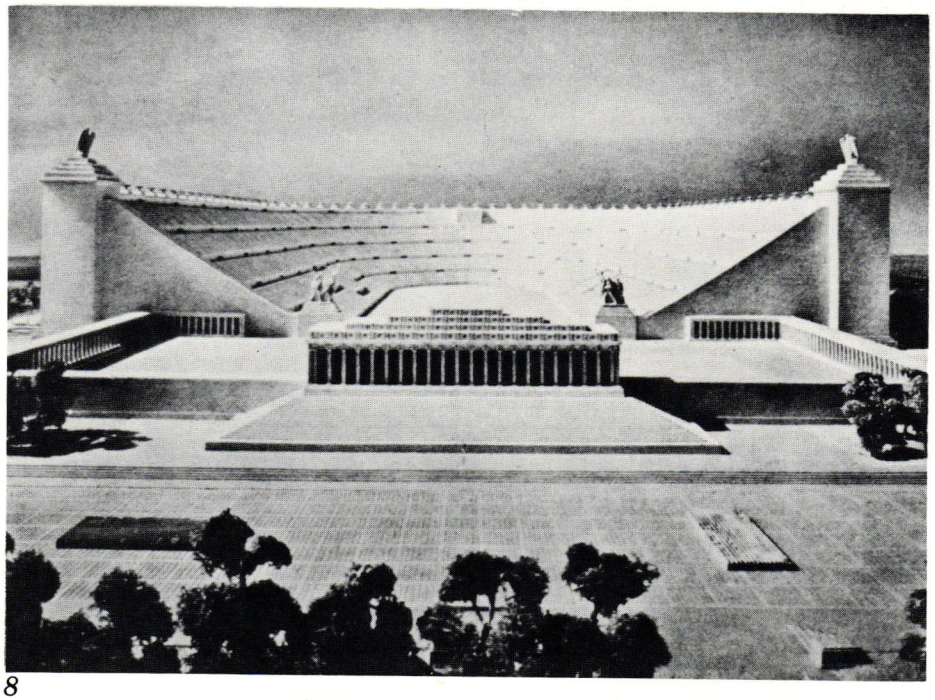

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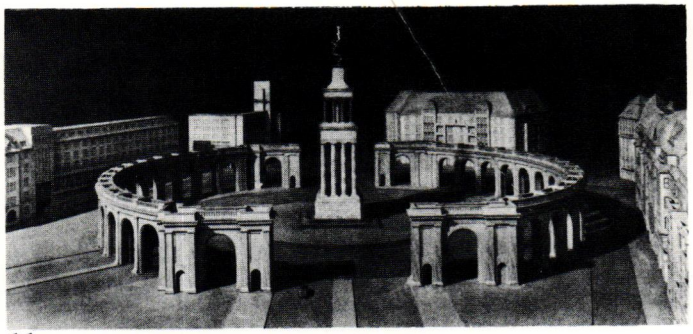
7 Congress Hall for the Reichsparteitag-Gelande, Nuremberg, model. Ludwig Ruff and Franz Ruff, 1935.

8 The Nuremberg Stadium, model. Albert Speer.

9 The Great Hall. Sketch by Adolf Hitler, 1925.

10 The Great Hall, Berlin, model. Albert Speer, 1937.



11 Monument to Mussolini, Reichskanzler Platz, model. Albert Speer, 1930.

11

the more important studies on this subject, that of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck on the Prussian style.[2]

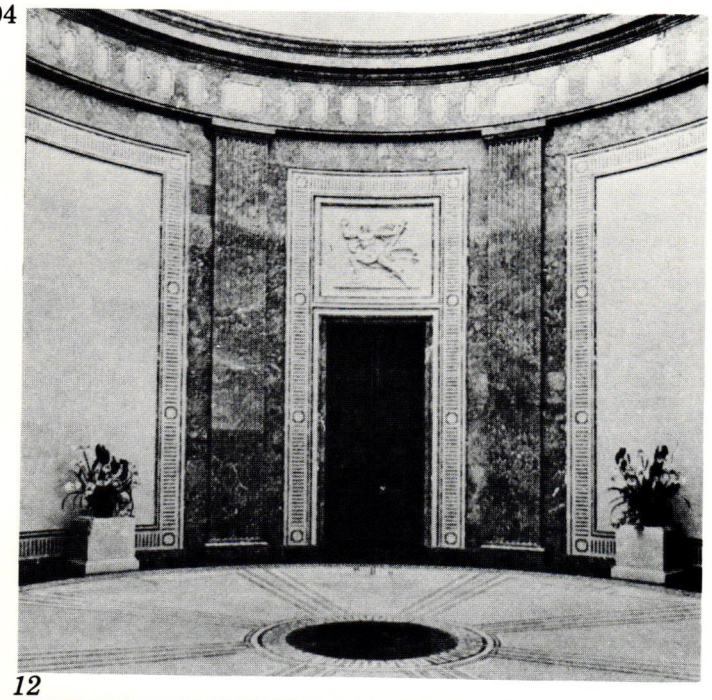
Nazism used the problem of tradition — a problem at the heart of the modern crisis — as a political instrument, and altered its meaning through the propaganda apparatus and the mechanisms of mass manipulation. For this reason, Nazi architecture, in nearly all its formal expressions, possessed a predominantly celebratory character. Its function was to evoke the multiform presence of the regime among the "essential communities" that formed the body of the nation, exalting its metahistorical, primordial, and racial unity according to a system of values that emerged as negative when compared to the decisively historical character of the tradition on which the architectural culture of the turn of the century intended to base its own organistic program. For this reason, Nazi architecture had no definitive style.

The goals of the regime served, in part, to explain the profound differences between the architectural developments in Nazi Germany and those in Italy during the Fascist period. The Italian architectural debate during those twenty years repeatedly confronted the problem of defining an "art of the regime." Cultural circles urged political powers to make a choice from among various "poetics," and to sanction the primacy of one. In Germany, the space reserved for such a dialectic was limited and vanished quickly with the marginalizing of old cultural warhorses, such as Alfred Rosenberg and Paul Schultze-Naumburg. Thus, once hegemony was complete, relationships of privilege formed among various architectural tendencies or formations and specific levels of power, each of which prepared its own means of self-celebration. Such an integration at differentiated levels produced not stylistic unity but an effective technical functionalization and homogenization of architectural tendencies with respect to the various specializations of power. While Italian architecture was conceiving of an "art of the regime" as the ratification of stylistic unity, Nazism was effecting ubiquitous control over the manifestations of architecture, with a specialization only of its functions.

We should not forget that a "national style" grounded in the continuity of tradition was a typical expression of conservatism, whose organic ideal found no solution in the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* (conformation of its political opponents) or in the regime's decision-making apparatus. While Moeller celebrates the "heroism" of its fight against the primacy of causality, the morality of its strict conception of tectonics, and the "mysticism" that Friedrich Gilly expressed, Nazi architecture instead appeared as a fragmented system of celebratory events, each interpreting an individual manifestation of power. Nazi architecture expressed meaning that transcended it, and extraneous goals whose fulfillment lay inevitably in autonomous political decision. Each artifact therefore implied an exaltation of a generalized principle of delegation, whose form could only be of a ritualistic nature.

Many of the most ambitious building programs launched by the Nazis did indeed have a ritual character, with functions similar to those suggested by Girard; one need only think of the party's schools, the service constructions planned along the highway network, or the interventions in the residential building sector like the *Kleinsiedlungen*, not to mention the spaces designed to hold mass demonstrations. If in these cases the architecture was based on anti-modern, formal convention, the ritual character was no less present in those instances where, as in industrial building, the architecture expectedly used constructive solutions which to the more rabid censors of rational architecture seemed to be unacceptable heirlooms of "cultural bolshevism." All possible architectonic solutions were called upon to express contingent functions of power, canonizing celebration. The task of creating spectacles could not possibly have found adequate expression in stylistic homogeneity, nor resolve itself in a formal homologizing of the regime.

An "absolute style" could be realized only by the definitive fulfillment of the ultimate ritual from which all transitory forms of celebration derived. This privilege



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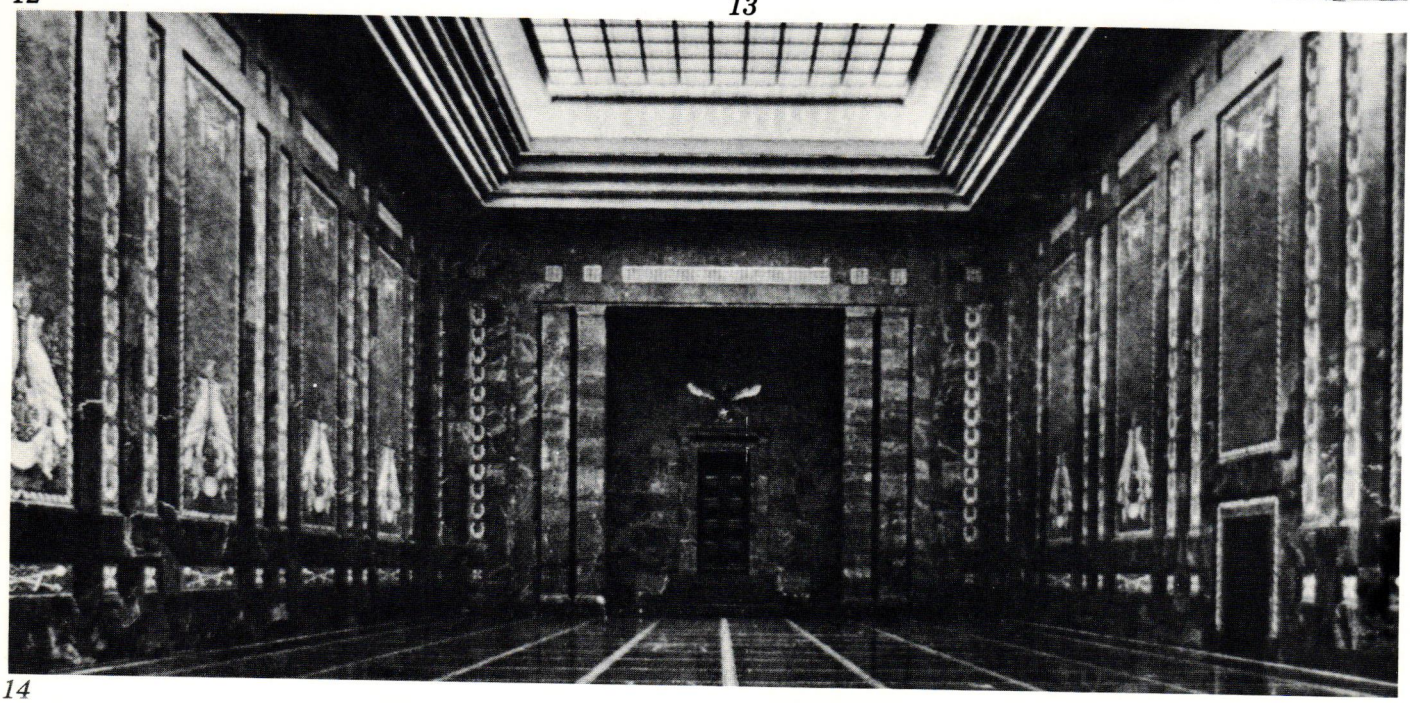

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was granted only to the architecture that functioned within the aura of the ultimate ritual, and was directed toward the reproduction of the aura. Only Albert Speer produced a definitive "architecture of the regime," an architecture that was the expression of an individual, unmediated relationship with the very source of power. All other experiences manifested themselves as unfulfilled struggles toward this form of direct communication with political decision-making, since such osmosis was reserved for the absolute authority guaranteed by the Führer. At all other levels, the relationship between architecture and power was subject to strong contaminations and contingencies, and hence the architecture was determined by technique.

While architecture at the lower levels merely anticipated the ultimate rite, Speer's architecture was an expression of absolute power. Speer directly interpreted power's form and purpose as Hitler himself conceived them, and as he articulated them to the workers employed at the construction site of the Nuremberg Zeppelin Field: "Why always the colossal? Because I want to build self-awareness in every German!"

The essence of Hitler's statement to the Nuremberg workers lay in the question itself. Indeed, the "colossal" in reality contained no educational function in itself; it did not justify itself in relation to the people, the nation, nor the Reich, until it had been assimilated into the arguments of the propaganda. In reality, the "colossal" of Speer's architecture was justified only in relation to the absolute will embodied in Hitler.[3]

The "definitively grand" was the ultimate scale of the Hitlerian *Führerprinzip*: only at this scale could the absolute rite be fulfilled. At the lower levels, as I have said, various instances of mediation operated. In those places where the "absolute word became stone," mediation ceased to have any function; "the word" manifested itself as irrevocable decision, not as "language" that educated and redeemed.

In the chapters of *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*,[4] in

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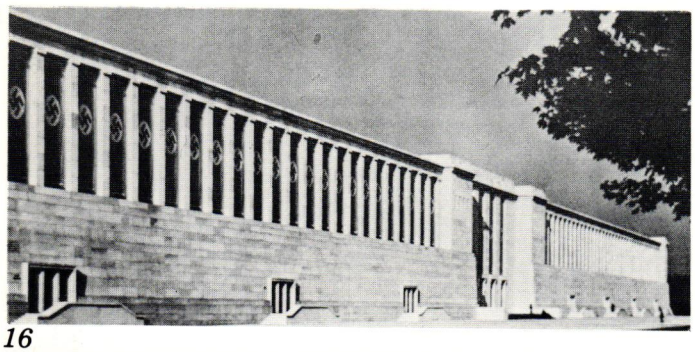
12 New State Chancellery, Round Room, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1939.

13 New State Chancellery, Round Room ceiling, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1939.

14 New State Chancellery, Mosaic Room, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1939.

15 New State Chancellery, view from the Vossestrasse, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1939.



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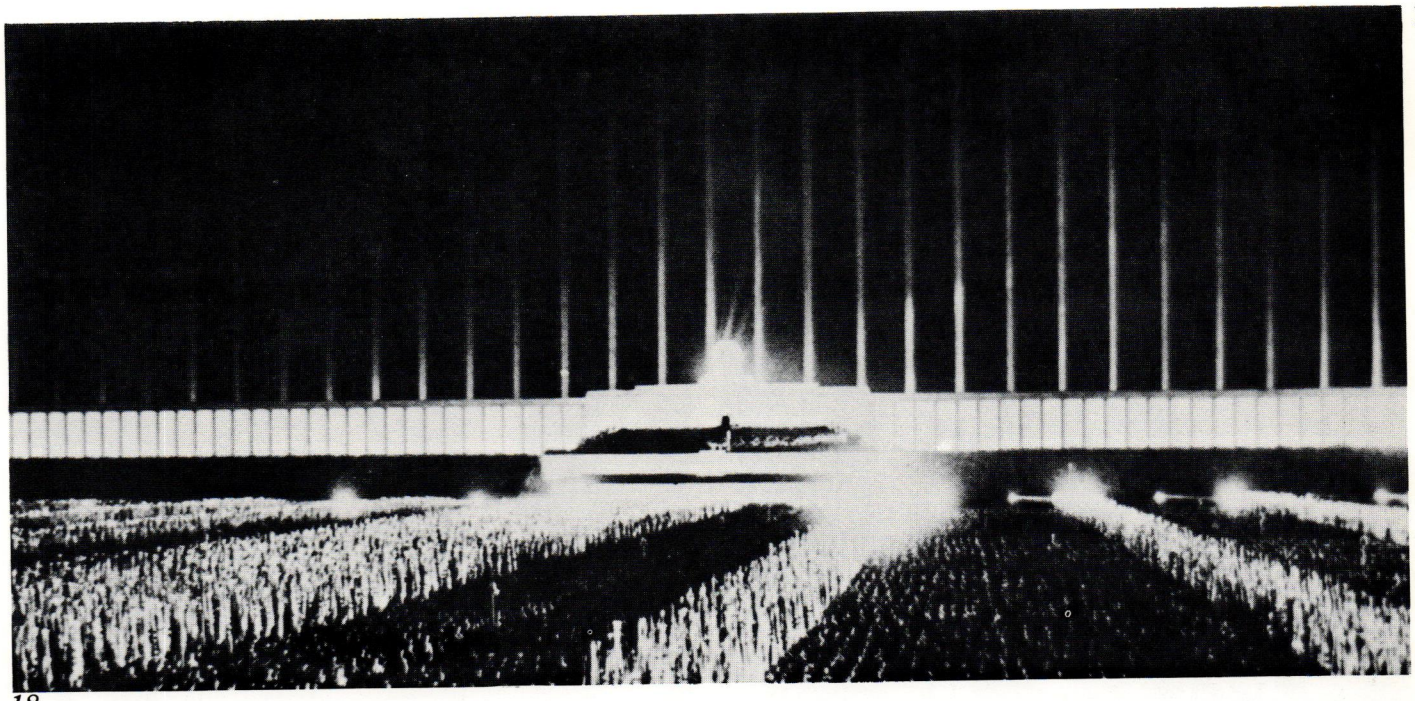
16, 17, 19 Zeppelinfeld Stadium, Reichsparteitag-Gelande, Nuremberg. Albert Speer, 1937.
18 Zeppelinfeld Stadium, during a rally, 1937.

which he punctiliously reconstructs his relationship as architect with Hitler, Speer appears to be conscious of working out of unbridled will. It is no accident that the most dramatic and sinister passages in Speer are those devoted to his work as an architect. He was tied to Hitler by a bond of total complicity. This guaranteed him a situation of *unFührer*. No difference of judgment between Hitler and his architect existed; every possible situation involving choice was made pointless by their common inclination to overcome. In matters of architecture, Hitler and Speer behaved like accomplices: they alone knew the real scope of the plans and programs they were elaborating. Hitler even authorized Speer to hide many appropriations that his projects would require. Their connivance was based on a strong mutual understanding. The function of this understanding was to eliminate in advance all chance of choice, and was based on their common embrace of the all-inclusive concepts of "overcoming" and "colossal." Every work of Speer invariably respected these fundamental requirements. The accord between the two men was held together by a continual fulfillment of the desire to overcome and by the consequent, shared conviction that nothing left behind by the history of human construction would ever overshadow the dimensions of Hitler's buildings.

(It is significant that the harmony between Hitler and Speer was maintained as long as Speer operated exclusively as an architect. In his capacity as Minister, Speer would choose of necessity to follow a collision course with the Führer's will; an act destined to ruin their relationship.)

Speer understood that the colossal could not present itself as the definitive image of power except by violating the qualities of building materials and thereby achieving dominion over the temporal dimension as well. To this he elaborated his "theory of ruins," which postulated the removal of all obstacles (or ruins) that might stand in the way of the "perpetual overcoming," of which Canetti has spoken. Speer's architectural works were designed to last beyond the decay of their forms, and to



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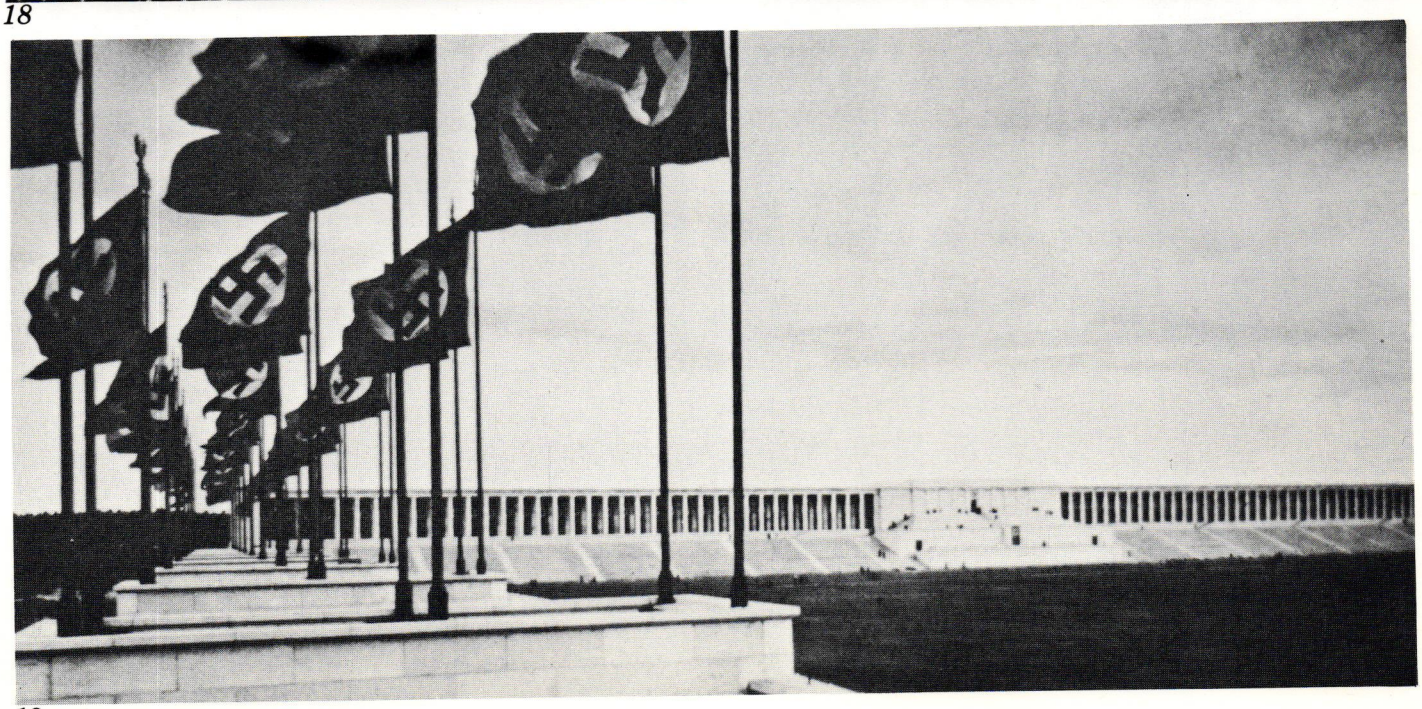

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20 Zeppelinfeld Stadium, colonnade.
21 Langemarckhalle, model, Berlin. Hans Dustmann, 1941.

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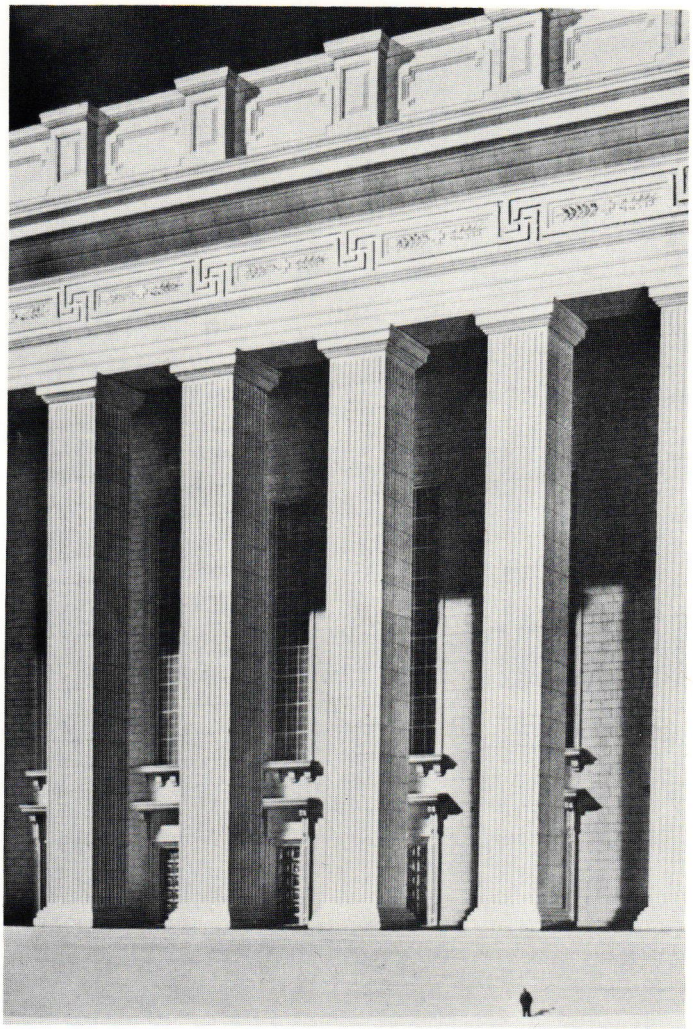

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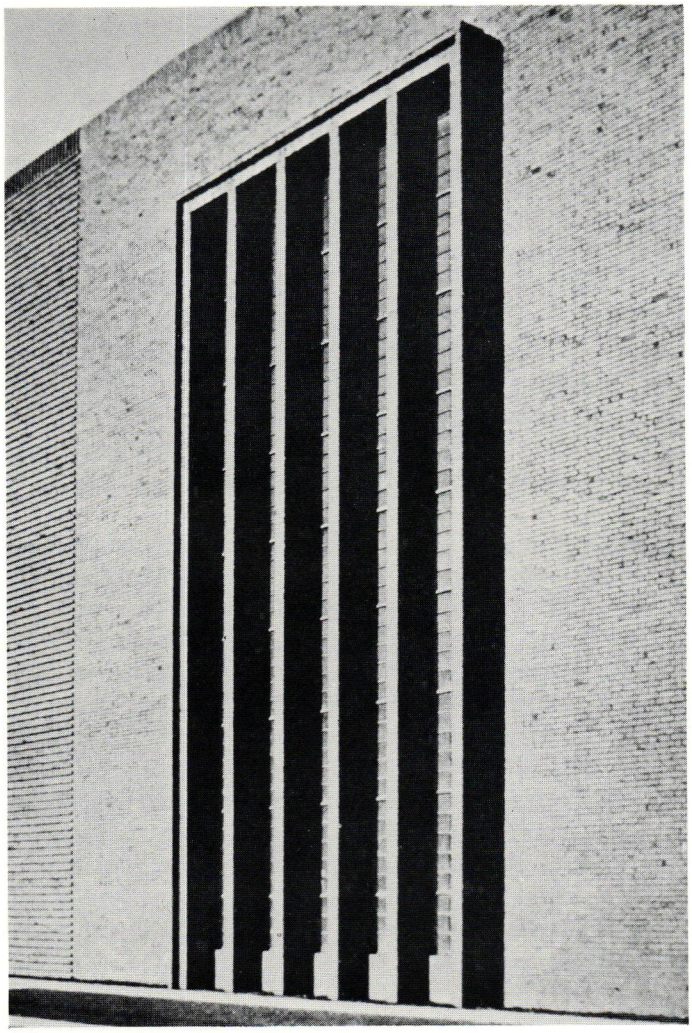
22 Nordstern Factory Coke Works. Fritz Kremmer and Martin Schupp.
23 South Station, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1937.



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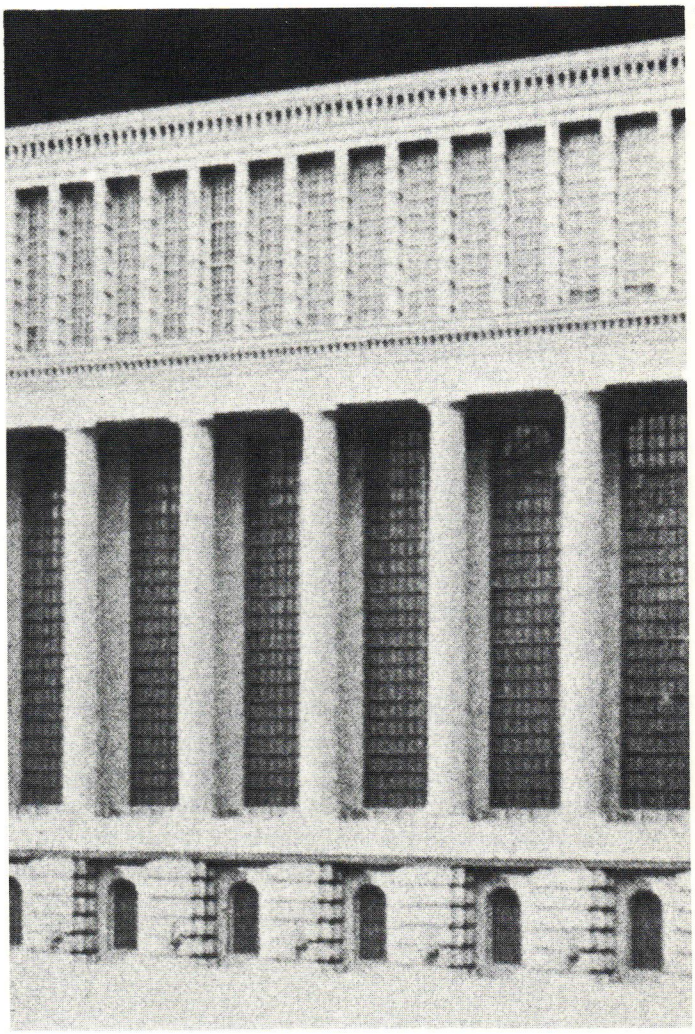

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survive as "planned" ruins. Form was conceived as an accessory; it drowned in dimensions and in time, and in the end proved unimportant. From a technical and a formal point of view, the most original and prominent features of Speer's projects were their eleborate solutions that ensured that the stone, the sole stylistic "foundation" of his building, would triumph over history. As a celebration of the eternal and intangible magnitude of the Führer's supreme power, Speer's architecture had to favor durability over form, since the only real form existed in conjunction with the abstraction and authority of power.

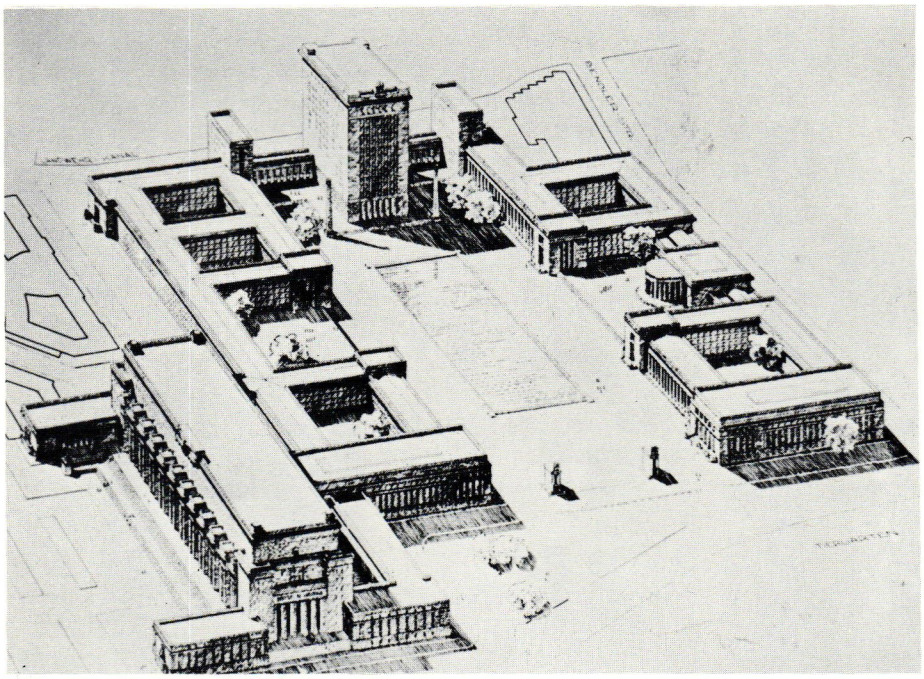
A corollary to the dominion exercised over space and time through the colossal was the disdain for any limit of a technical or material order that might qualify the celebration of the absolute. For this reason Speer, aside from embracing types without time and solutions without style, always worked toward "hiding" the technique and denying visibility to all technologically mediated solutions by means of a "primitive tectonics."

In the end, the fundamental dimensions of this architecture turned out to be those of the void; both the minor buildings and the far-reaching urbanistic projects that Speer designed are proof of this. Indeed, only in the evocation of the void was the anxiety to overcome allayed, and the colossal constructed according to the appropriate dimensions: the architecture then represented the goal of the Führer's power — to fulfill itself as millenary form.

The Chancellery — although still a "provisional" edifice and destined, in Hitler's programs, to be replaced by a more "worthy" construction — was composed of a sequence of voids which exalted the function of the wait and the approach of the ultimate rite. The particular character of the spaces of the Chancellery that led up to the Führer's workroom was expressed on a scale equal to that of the Nuremberg Zeppelin Field. The architecture returned to elementary tectonics and cancelled itself in the processional sequence of vast, empty reaches. The "passage" through these different spaces symbolized the wait that came to an end with the cathartic fusion brought about by the Führer's word. In predisposing the directions of this movement, the architecture became a negligible event from a formal or stylistic point of view. The studied movements of the masses in formation, the choreography that exalted their continuous expansion in a progressive identification with the word of the leader, replaced or rendered useless the presence and function of the bearing elements as architectonic events. As space, the Zeppelin Field lived only in the light of the party, in the fulfillment of the rite; it was the masses alone who, arrayed in this space, turned a potential void into a formally significant space, giving order and meaning through their own movements to a flat extension. At the end of the ceremony, the complex returned to being an absence and a simple place of waiting.

As has been noted often, Speer's temporary installations figure among his more successful works. Only superficially might it seem surprising that this is correct, given the fact that so much importance is attributed to the "theory of ruins," which Speer formulated for his own, more significant, building. But on closer examination, one finds that there is no substantial contradiction between these two characteristic aspects of Speer's work. Like the large, temporary sets he designed for special anniversaries, which were made to last a brief period of time, his monumental edifices would not last long as formally completed constructions, since only as tectonically conceived ruins could they adequately represent the millenary aspirations of the regime.

In both cases, therefore, it was not the architectural form that was important, but that which survived it — or better yet, the fact that it echoed eternally a word that always appeared as an irrevocable decision. Ever conscious of its transitory nature and of the precariousness of its intrinsic values, Speer's architecture was dominated by a profound sense of death. However, it did not represent the same celebration of death through a series of "rites of passage." Such celebration found its appropriate form, for example, in the monuments to the fallen, through which Wilhelm Kreis



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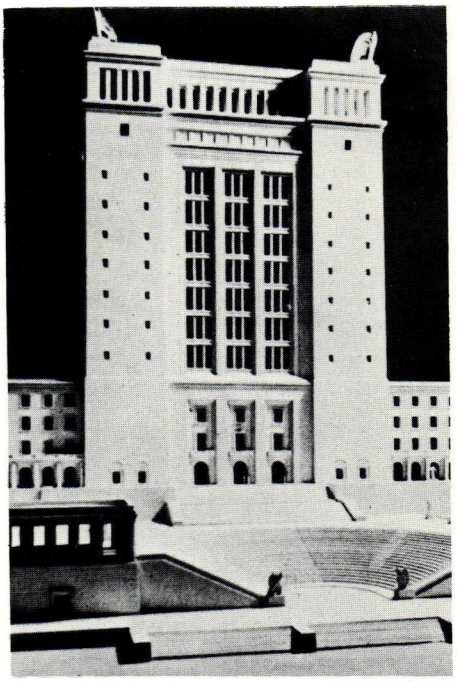

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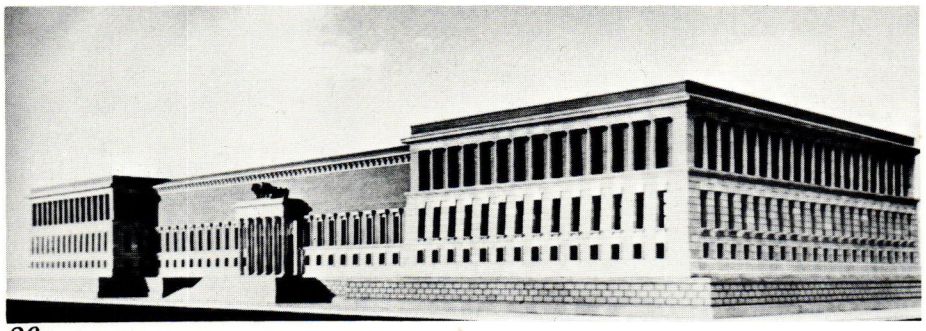

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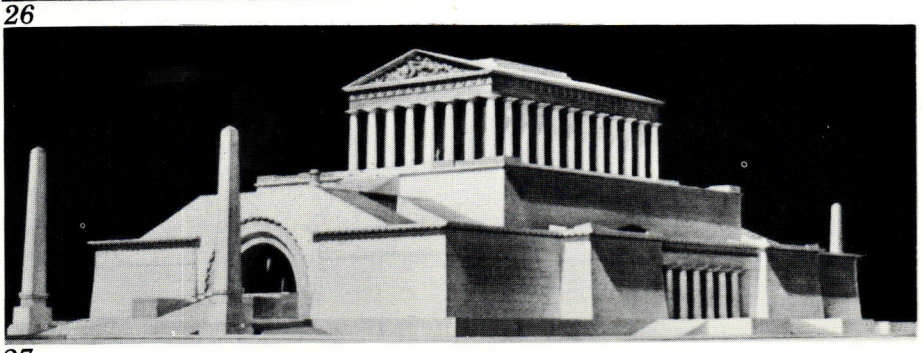

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24 The National Socialist University on the Chiemsee, model.

25 New Headquarters for the High Command of the Army and the Soldiers' Hall, Berlin. Wilhelm Kries, 1942.

26 Hunting Museum, model. F. Hetzelt, 1940.

27 Monument to Frederick the Great, model. F. Gilly, 1797.

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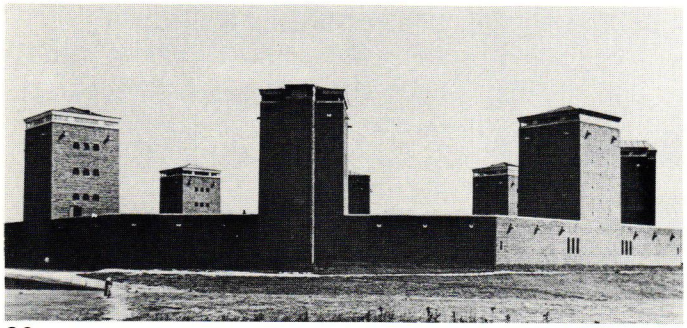

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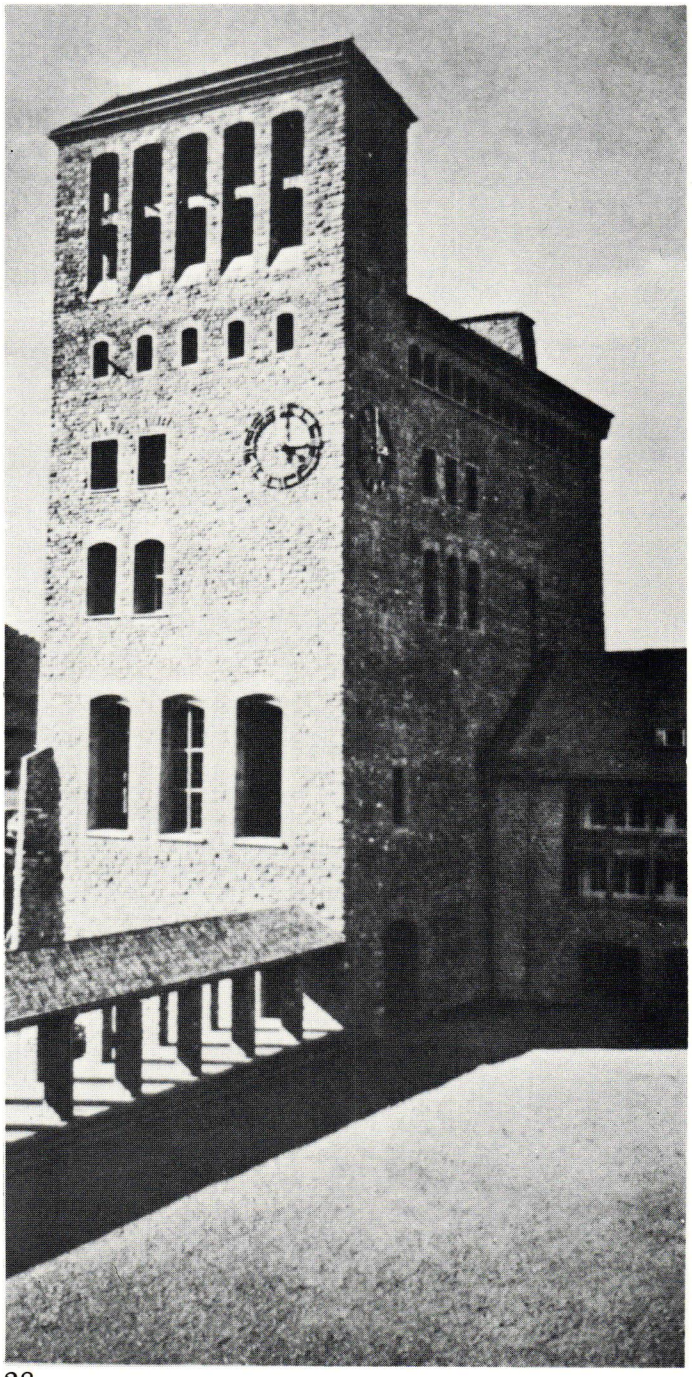
28, 29 Nazi Training School, Sonthofen. Hermann Giesler, 1936-1937.
30 Monument to the Reich, Tannenberg. Johannes Kruger and Walter Kruger, 1927.



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meant to symbolize the inviolable frontier of the expanded Reich, in the East as well as in Africa. If anything, these projects of Kreis symbolize the extreme decline of the formal ideals of Moeller; they nevertheless represent part of a tradition. Kreis gave voice to the spirit of Gilly and the lugubriousness of the Tannenberg Memorial.

Speer's was the only architecture where the project itself embraced death. The project for the enormous Arch of Triumph, intended for the program for the reconstruction of Berlin, stands as proof of this. The edifice literally was to have been constructed out of the names of all the Germans who died in the First World War. An immense tattoo, as Canetti has pointed out, would have represented only an extreme act of "expanding" the masses, extending the collective rite of the celebration of the Führer's power to include the invoked presence of all those fallen for the glory of Germany. In this instance Speer did not conceive a specific form that presented itself as an evocation of death, mournfully celebrating its glorious memory; rather, he effected a simple emptying of an architectonic type, whose traditional signification would get lost in the juxtaposition of the uncommon dimensions with the extension of the "presence" of the masses beyond their real physical limits. The colossal was attained in this definitive celebration of the rite, and the architecture disappeared once again as a specific event.

A still broader sense of death dominated the "form" that Speer intended for Berlin. His plan was based on an extreme expansion of the emptiness that was the scale proper evoked by both the Chancellery and the Zeppelin Field. In Berlin the void became the ambience of an all-inclusive rite that was carried out according to a sequence of stages leading up to its culmination in an eternalization of time.

With this plan Speer brought to full expression several of the tendencies implicit in Nazi architecture. Berlin, no less than Nuremberg, is radical evidence of the indifference to an idealized notion of environment. Such

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31 Youth Hostel Project, model, Bielfeld.

32 Settlements at Ramersdorf near Munich.
33 Housing Exposition at Dusseldorf.
34 Highway Inn on the Reichsautobahn, between Berlin and Halle.
35 Private Residence of Albert Speer, Berlin.
36 Open Air Theatre, Berlin-Grunewald. Dietrich Eckart.

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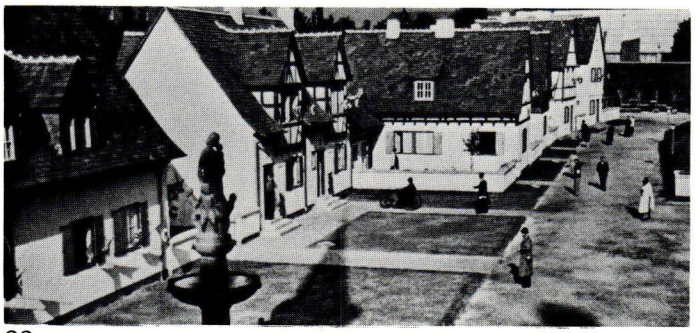

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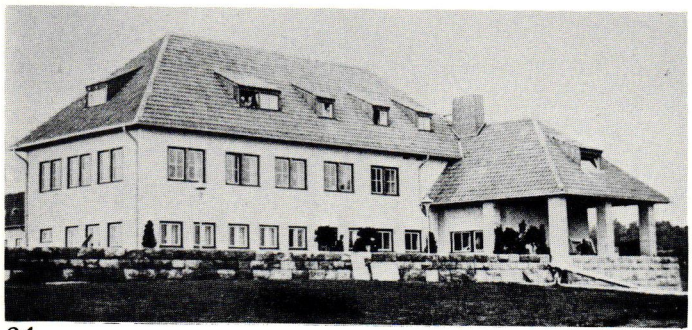

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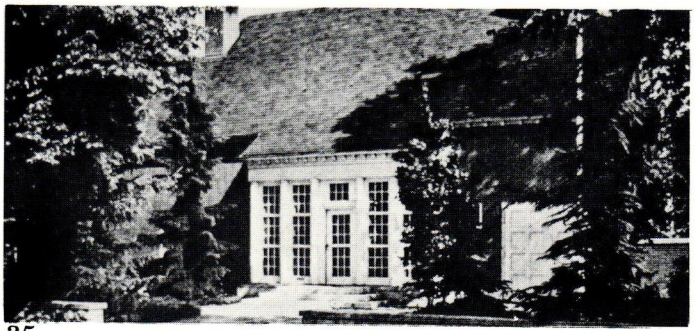

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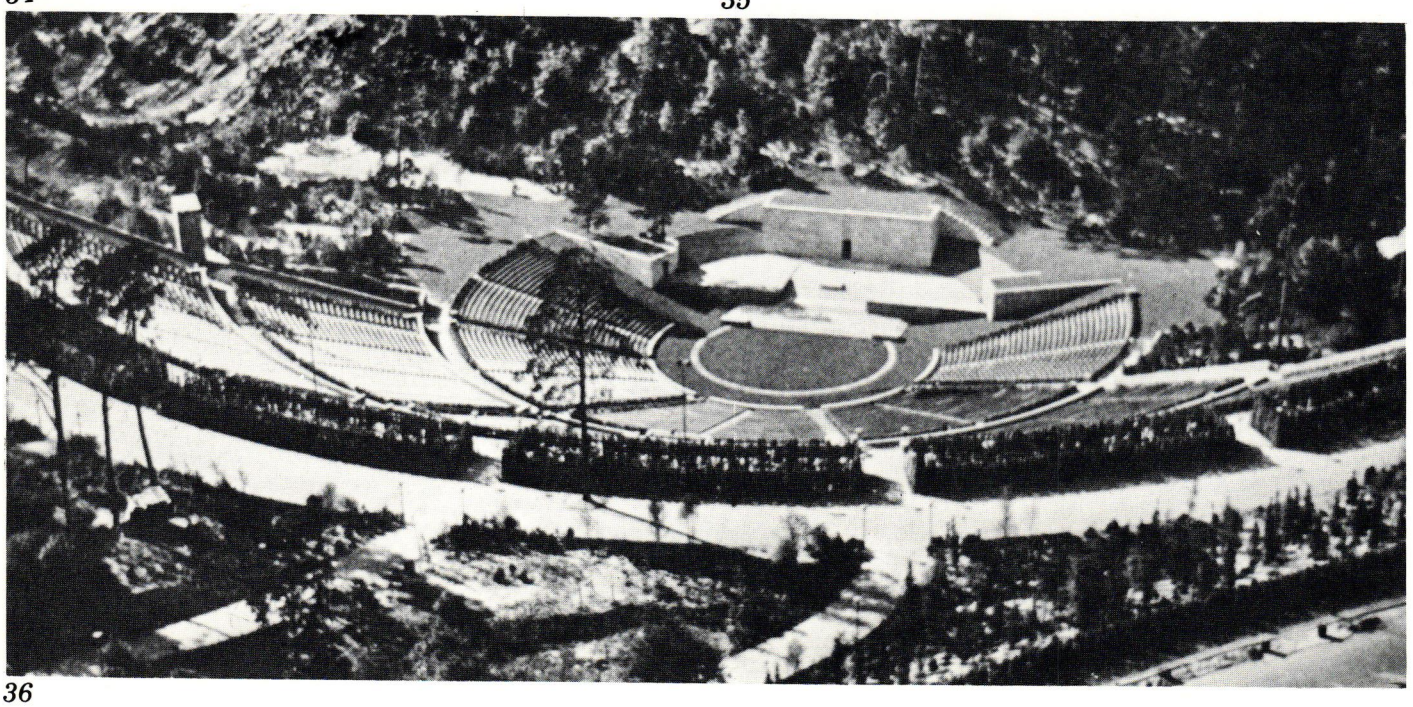

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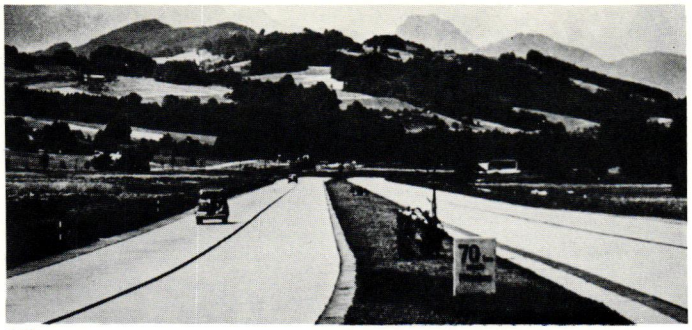

37 Reichsautobahn, Munich-Salzburg.

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architecture never conceived of the "place" as embodying a primordial harmony, but rather a tension. On the other hand, Nazi constructions almost always established an instrumental relationship with the existing context, since the exaltation and manipulation of nature had the function of favoring the progressive expansion of the masses and the identification of their basic sectors with the organic structure of the regime. Speer's plan for Berlin epitomized this tendency, establishing a direct correlation between the construction of the void and the celebration of death.

At first glance, it is difficult to imagine anything more anti-modern than the monumental projects planned by Speer for the capitol of the Reich. By programmatically placing themselves outside history, Speer's projects were ignorant of every modern current. But if we examine closely the plan for Berlin, we cannot help but notice the rationality — even though disclaimed — of its solutions. The functional arrangement of the city is treated remedially, in accordance with well-tested strategies. In this respect, Speer was not too far from a design practice explored fully by the canons of bourgeois urbanism.

As the favorite architect of a regime that officially considered cities to be funereal "deserts of asphalt," and exalted the racially pure characteristics of the traditional makeup of the peasant world, Speer seemed once again ignorant of these official positions in drawing up his plan for Berlin. When faced with the problems that emerged in this project, Speer acted decisively, formulating a series of coherent technical solutions. The fundamental decision to represent celebratory and didactic qualities by the creation of a central axial system was accompanied by a program for an efficient transport system and a rejection of the natural logic of the concentric expansion of the city. The plan made no concession to the models of the anti-metropolitan urbanistic tradition. In order to achieve the functional and the monumental goals of his program, Speer planned vast clearance operations; these are the key to the project.

The importance of Speer's decision is expressed in the planning of the north-south, east-west axes. To be constructed along the east-west axis were several huge buildings representing the determination of the entire plan. The buildings made up a processional system and, as such, cancelled their own forms to become the sequential points of a *single* perspective within which the image of the city would disappear. In this spatial organization an irreversible order was realized, marking the materialization of a nightmarish apparition: the monumental mathematization of the urban space. What triumphed as well was the representation of the void. Like the Nuremberg work, the large Berlin monuments were designed to live a reflected life; they assumed timeless forms that denied all dialogue with the surrounding, existing context.

It is the reduction of architecture to a pure aspiration of the void, the transformation of the urban environment into a space whose real scale is that of the infinite expansion of the mass moving within it as commanded, that is the true anti-city of Nazism. Berlin, the anti-city, was not an event without tradition, however: in its emptiness and its geometric perfection, one finds a radical expression and monstrous fulfillment of the very same aspirations of power and order that motivated every project that undertook the urbanistic rebuilding of metropolitan life. This result would be largely inexplicable if analyzed as a natural and logical product of remote cultural premises. As I have already suggested, it is in reality explicable only in the light of the exceptional conditions in which Speer found himself working. In the Berlin plan, the architecture interpreted the absolute will of the regime; the plan acquired the function of authority and decision-making; all disciplines were now identified with power. The city became an unrepeatable aberration, even with respect to the more violent aspects of the bourgeois, urbanistic tradition.

This, however, cannot explain any attempt to eliminate from our cultural horizon the dangers implicit in the more atavistic inclinations of modern architecture, which forever tends to lament the absence of new Col-

 berts on its own horizon.

The modern hatred for the city took on a Faustian dimension in Speer's Berlin, in the spirit of death that hovered among the colossal buildings, in the face of which the surrounding urban environment was supposed to have disappeared as in a dusty fog. Kreis, carrying out the construction of the monuments dedicated to the fallen, intended to celebrate with symbols of mourning Germany's reconquest of its own history. In Speer's edifices there was no sense of mourning; they lived by their own absence of form and were nourished only in terms of the "overflowing" of their own dimensions (*dimensioni zampullanti*, to use Canetti's image). They justified themselves only as episodes of an unending extension of the ritual, of a unification in the ritual of the masses growing ever greater in number — and as allusions to an absolute void, from which emerged, in all their immensity, the will and irrevocability of a word as absolute as the void itself. In this tension the architecture disappeared. It negated itself and self-destructed, completing its definitive identification with the supreme authority of the regime. Hitler's love for architecture was destructive indeed: in the face of the colossal, form could only appear evanescent. Proof of this lies in the advice that Hitler gave to Speer in the summer of 1939, when he mentioned that it was useless, once the Berlin Kappelberg was completed, to plan for the placement of an eagle at its summit, 290 meters high. "The eagle of the swastika must not go up there," asserted Hitler. "The eagle must instead tower over the entire globe of the world! The eagle atop the globe of the world shall be the crown of the greatest edifice in the world!"[5]

1. René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris, Editions Bernard Grasset, 1972).
2. Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Der preussische stil ...* (Breslau, W.G. Korn Verlag, 1931). On this item see Francesco Dal Co, *Teorie del moderno: Architettura, Germania 1880-1920* (Bari, Laterza, 1982).
3. Elias Canetti, in *Crowds and Power* (New York, Seabury Press, 1978), translation by Carol Stewart, provides what is perhaps the most definitive interpretation of the meaning of Speer's architecture. In light of his argument, it would be difficult to add anything of significance to the pages of *Crowds and Power* and *Crowds and Survival*, aside from my marginal clarifications.
4. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs* (New York, Macmillan, 1970).
5. These considerations of the work of Albert Speer should be read as an historical-critical integration of what has been documented by Francesco Dal Co and Sergio Polano in their interview with Speer, *Oppositions 12*, Spring 1978.

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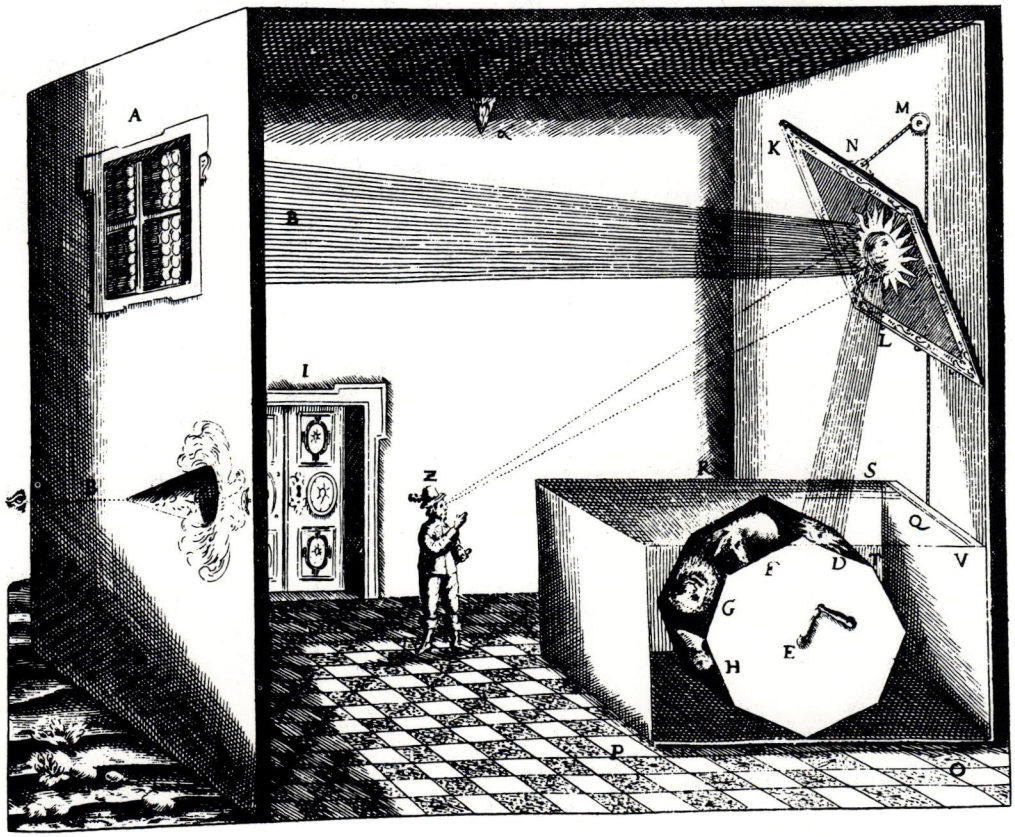
1, 8, 10, 12, 14, 20, 22, 24, 28, 29, and 32-38 From *A Nation Builds* (New York: German Library of Information, 1940).
2, 4, 11, 17, 21, 23, 26, 27 From Lars Larsson, *Die Neugestaltung der Reichshauptstadt*, Stockholm Studies in Art, no.29 (Stockholm, Sweden, 1978).
3, 5, 6, 9 From Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).
7, 18, 30 From Robert Taylor, *The Word in Stone* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).
13, 15 From Angela Schönberger, *The New State Chancellery of Albert Speer* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1981).
16, 1r From Barbara Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).



1

Architecture of Mirror/Mirror of Architecture

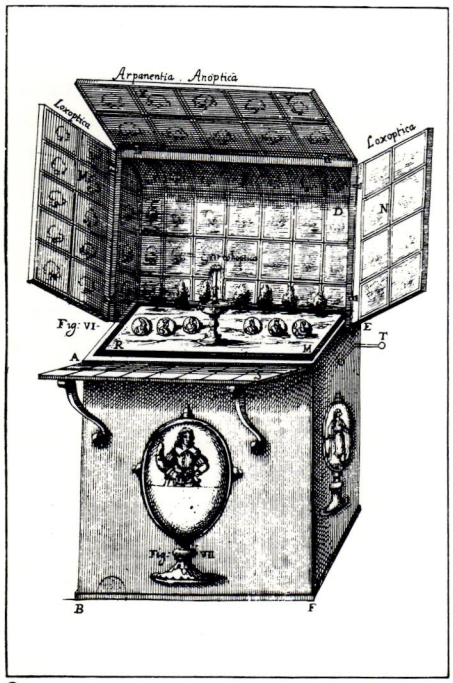
Diana Agrest

1 Machine Changing Men into Animals (*Metamorphoses I, II, and III*). *Athanase Kircher, 1646.*

What is there in mirrored glass that makes it so different from every other material in architecture? To start with a description of the material quality of a building is not the usual way of approaching an architectural problem. We do not speak of an architecture of stone, an architecture of brick, or an architecture of wood in order to explain a cultural phenomenon; why then do we qualify this architecture of mirrors by its materiality? Because buildings in materials such as these are the materialization of a previously drawn image. The mirror, however, *dematerializes* the building, producing other images instead.

The architecture of mirrors makes manifest the image as a conflicting element in architecture. More than anything else, mirror *is* image; it is the foremost vehicle not only for producing an image, but making that image manifest. From Narcissus' image reflected on the water to the catoptric machines of the seventeenth century, anything that deals specifically with the mirror deals with the question of image. In a more sophisticated elaboration, the mirror relates to our capacity to symbolize, as we face our own reflections, from the first time we contemplate our image in the mirror state (as developed by Lacan).[1] The relationship, then, between image and language, and our capacity for symbolization, inextricably tied to the imaginary "unification" of the fragmented body in "mirror stage," is at the heart of this discussion of the architecture of mirrors.

I will focus primarily on the relationship between image and language in architecture. In classical architecture, image and language were part of the same system; the image was produced by the elements of architectural language and was put into a system with other architectural elements. The use of mirrors seems to have been a way of articulating specific architectural codes with other non-architectural codes, of dealing with images and modes of representation such as perspective and theatre. In modern architecture, however, there is a split between image (in the classical sense) and language, or between representation and signification. In modern architecture, and particularly in the recent



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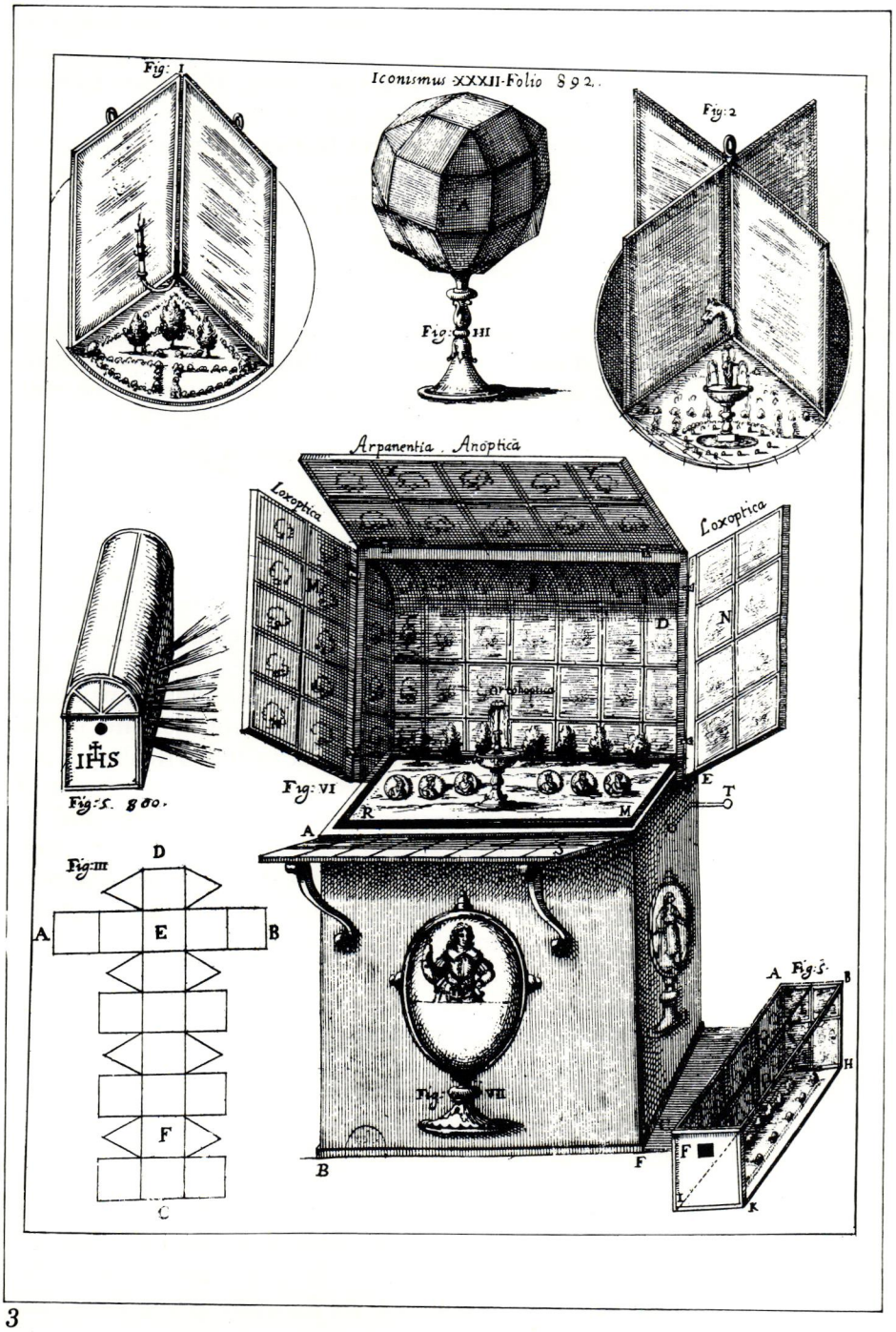
2 Theatre Polydicticum. *Athanase Kircher, 1646.*
3 Catoptric Machines. Athanase Kircher, 1646.
4 Cylindrical Mirror, Generator of Ghosts. *Athanase Kircher, 1646.*

examples of mirrored architecture, the mirror is not in a system with architectural language or elements of language; instead, the image is articulated with other systems that focus on the image, such as photography and cinema. The meaning of an architecture of mirrors today is more a symptom of a moment of transition and adjustment than an established condition in and of itself.

The best example of the play between image and language in classical architecture is offered by Quatremère de Quincy in his book *De l'imitation*. In it he differentiates between imitation in the Beaux-Arts and imitation in nature. The latter is what he calls similitude by identical repetition, as opposed to the notion of imitation in the Beaux-Arts; to imitate in the Beaux-Arts is to produce the resemblance of one thing in another, which then becomes its image. The resemblance produced by imitation does not repeat the object in reality, but rather the object in image. Referring to the production of such image, Quatremère talks about metaphoric operations and the elements of architecture in an almost linguistic manner. The notion of image seems to be essential to architecture; it is an object and not a mental construct; it is an object related to other objects (models) through elements of architectural languages.[2]

The mirror as used in classical interiors, from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, was always part of the system of openings. To produce an image of imitation with an interior space, the mirror (not its image) was used as one of the elements of the architectural language, as one of the windows.[3] It was used to produce a dematerialization of the wall, creating visual illusions such as those of the Galerie des Glaces in Versailles by Jules Hardouin Mansart and Charles Le Brun in 1678. The image in the mirror, on the other hand, refers to architectural space, creating opening effects through perspective, depth, and rhythm, as may be seen in the oval room at the Hôtel de Soubise by Boffrand (1730). The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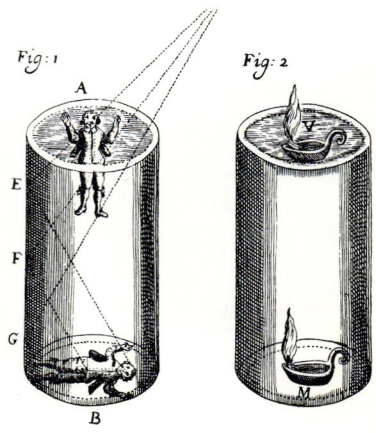
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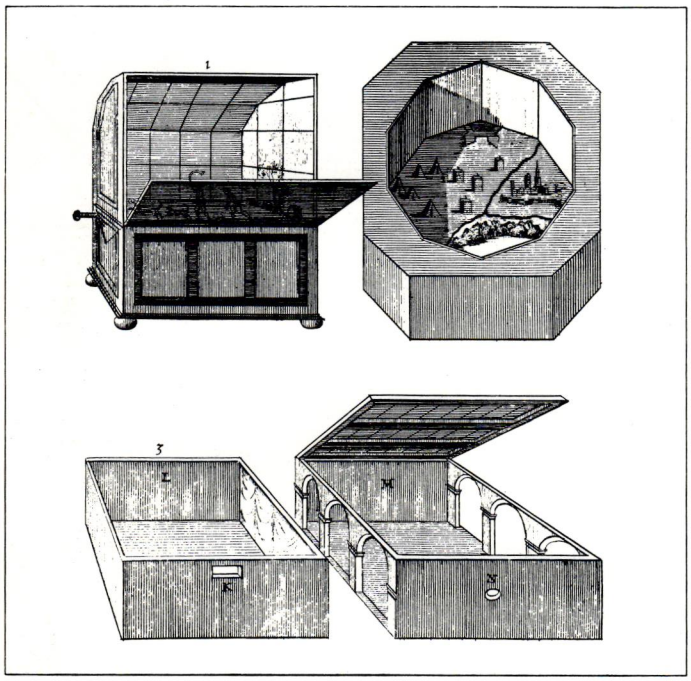

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5 Catoptric boxes and furniture. Jacques du Breuil, 1649.

6 Gallery, Palazzo dell'Accademia Filarmonica, Turin. Bendetto Allieri and Giovanni Battista Borra, c. 1760-1770.

7 Galerie des Glaces, Versailles. J.H. Mansart and Charles le Brun, c. 1678.

value of the architectural space created by the image in the mirror opposed that of the pictorial space produced by the painted images on the ceiling, which are framed in a manner and position similar to the mirrors, as is exemplified clearly in The Mirror Room in the Residenzschloss at Fulda, Germany, by Adalbert von Walderdorff, Prince Bishop of Fulda in 1757, or in the Palazzo dell'Accademia Filarmica in Turin (1760-70) by Benedetto Allieri and Giovanni Battista Borra.

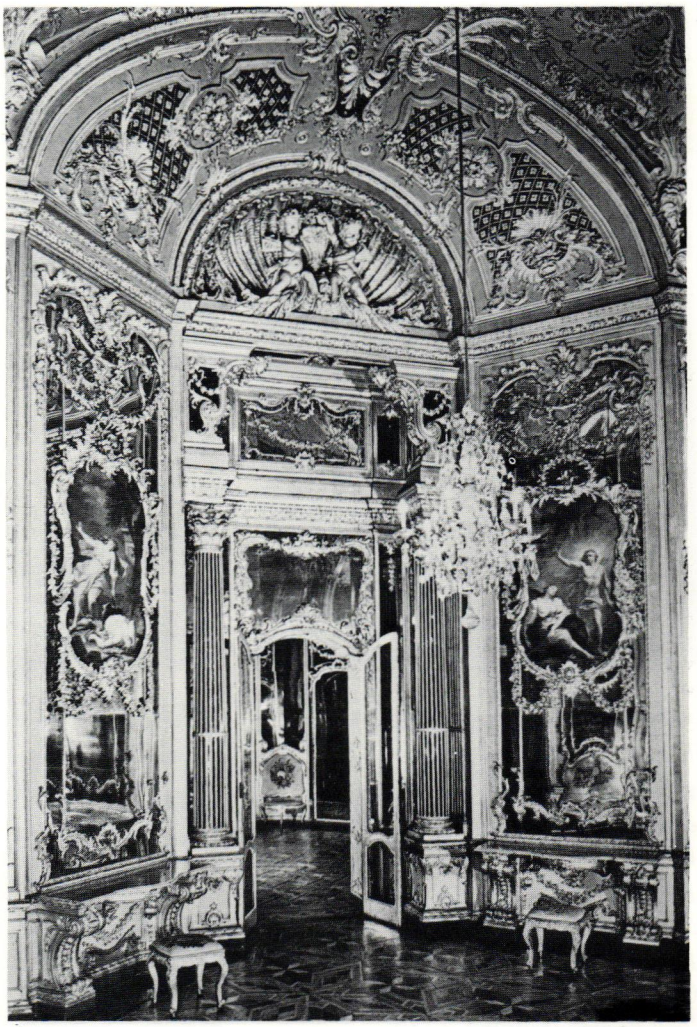
The mirror, essentially an element of interior architecture and space, also addresses the question of representation; the mirror is a virtual plane between the real and representation of the real. Because it has this property, it has also been capable of playing with or tricking reality.

In the classical period, mirrors were used mostly in interiors and were consistently articulated with a spatial exploration that was occurring not only in architecture, where it was trying to produce the dematerialization of the limits of the building through depth, light, and dynamic forms, but in other fields as well, such as painting and theatre. Mirrors played a major role not only in the production of spatial effects, but in the articulation between theatre and architecture. Catoptric machines of the seventeenth century, which were instrumental in the development of spatial illusions, attest to this. They dealt with questions of the perception of space and real space. These machines combined amusing optical games with a knowledge of the laws and mechanisms of sight.

Gaspar Schott, in his *Magia universalis naturae et artis* (1657), describes two catoptric mechanisms: Theatrical Machines with flat mirrors and Metamorphic Apparatus with curved and flat mirrors. The simplest combination consists of two flat mirrors articulated by a hinge over a disc, with variable angles. This elementary system is multiplied in the Catoptric Polydicticum Theatre. It becomes a cabinet whose interior is covered with flat mirrors. "By the overload of shiny surfaces, by the richness and extravagance of its figurations, the Theatrum

Polydicticum joins the scenography of the baroque."[4]

The same principle is later developed as a room, 6.5m x 3.5m, in which the players are no longer marionettes but human beings. Reconstructed at an architectural scale, the catoptric box now encloses a piece of life. Mirrors become bigger and are used prolifically; in keeping with a new visionary order, mural surfaces are progressively broken and spaces become part of the world of illusion, as in the Maison-Lafitte Galerie des Glaces of 1650, the Salon de Guerre at Versailles of 1680, Bavarian baroque and rococo castles, and the Galleria degli Specchi at Mantova of the eighteenth century. Mirror turning machines were also produced and were used to animate religious scenes. In the Speculum Polydictum of Jean Trithème (1518), eight different metamorphoses are proposed by the use of various combinations of mirrors and reflection mechanisms. In all these machines there is the suppression of all limits of space, which opens the way to all kinds of evasions.[5] At the center of this theatre of pleasure or guilt is the subject: duplicated, repeated, metamorphosed, or suspended, in an indefinite space.



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The world of magic and miracles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where the inexplicable soul and the mysteries of life were justified through mystical and metaphysical constructs with the help of devices such as mirrors and catoptric machines, has its counterpart in the late nineteenth century: the development of psychoanalysis.

With the development of modern architecture, several very important changes occur. On one hand the perception of image becomes part of a whole different system of thought: no longer an object related to the problem of representation or imitation, it becomes a mental construct. Historical discourse is replaced as a source of inspiration by the mechanisms of the mind, that is, the mechanisms of the unconscious, described by a

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8 Mirror Room, Residenzschloss, Fulda, Germany, 1757.

9 Pommersfelden, sala terrena. *Johann Dientzenhofer with rocaille by George Hennicke, c. 1715.*

10 Hôtel d'Uzés salon. Claude Nicolas Ledoux, 1769.

11 Hôtel de Soubise, Salon Ovale. Germain Boffrand, with paintings by Charles Natoire, 1735.

12 Mirror Salon of the Amelienburg. Johann Baptist Zimmerman, c. 1735.

psychological discourse or a psychoanalytical discourse. On the other hand, the negation of the classical language of architecture, and therefore its elements, in favor of a more abstract non-representational formal system, leads to the progressive elimination of certain elements. One of the clearest examples of this is that of the liberation of the 'plane' from the facade, whereby the wall becomes a skin, giving way to the elimination of the classical notion of the window.

With the modern movement and the development of abstract thought and the tendency toward abstraction, not only have styles been banished but also the need for figuration; thus on the one hand the image is related to the new theories of perception postulated by gestalt psychology, and on the other hand, meanings are achieved as they relate to abstract notions of geometry and physics.[6]

The language of architecture, in a classical sense, is destroyed. Fragments of languages develop with a more or less unified vocabulary, but certainly not as a consistent language. Technical developments advance a new aesthetic which dispenses with some of the major elements of classical language, such as openings. One of these developments, a major one, is the possibility of a structure independent from the walls. Domino is a prime example of this. The window, as it was known in a figurative sense, now has the possibility of disappearing and taking upon itself any imaginable configuration and composition with other windows.[7] With this, the wall becomes an independent element which may be treated in any desired manner. The window will ultimately disappear altogether in order to transform the building into either one big window or no window at all. Glass, already used as a technological device developed in the nineteenth century together with cast iron, and used mostly for functional or extravagant purposes (as in the Salons des Expositions Universelles or the Crystal Palace), now finds a theoretical support and acquires a new meaning.

It is clear, then, how various tendencies of the modern

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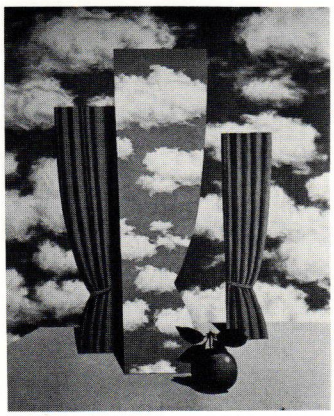


13
13 Le beau monde (*The Beautiful World*). *René Magritte, 1960.*

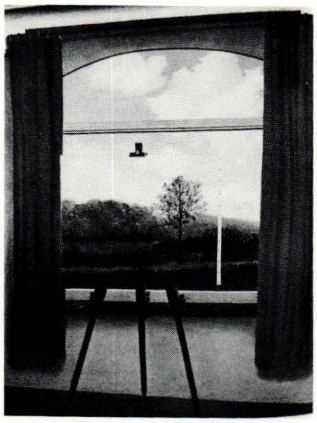
avant-garde coincided to propose an architecture of light and glass as the epitome of a new world. The elements of architectural language are no longer the elements of architecture, but rather the expression of volumetric organization as projections from inner images. The perception of representation and figuration in an historical sense is gone.

Two formal developments take place. One is the development of the glass box transformed from the irregular, *qum* expressionist, Mies skyscraper into the new classic form of the pure glass box. The other is a kind of super-articulated volumetric architecture, a play of volumes under light.

Mirror buildings seem to derive directly from the aesthetic form of the glass box at the start. With the illusory dematerialization of the wall, the architecture of mirrors is not only in complete opposition to classical architecture, but also creates an opposition within modern architecture.

Transparent clear glass suffers some transformations. First it is darkened, then it is mirrored; at this moment, a perfect opposition is established between glass and mirror. Glass architecture was part of an entire abstract formal system in which figuration and representation were brought to a minimum; when glass became mirror, this architecture was no longer consistent with the system from which it originated; it even questioned it. With mirror buildings we face a vocabulary derived from abstraction as a support for the most realistic of images, the mirrored ones.

It is probably not coincidental that the first mirror building, the Bell Laboratories by Eero Saarinen of 1962, was designed at one of the critical moments of modern architecture; a moment when the architecture of the glass box seemed it could go no further. The box remains the abstract entity, the pure form and the pure function; no ornament, no figuration. The mirror, pure image applied to the box, takes charge of the figurative role. With this move, critical particularly in retrospect,



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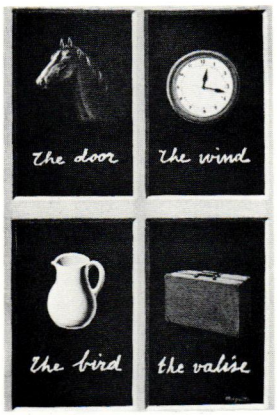

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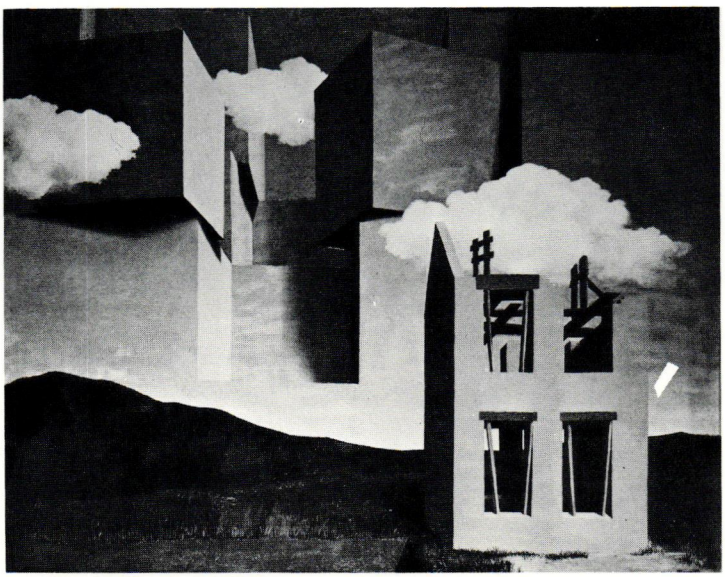

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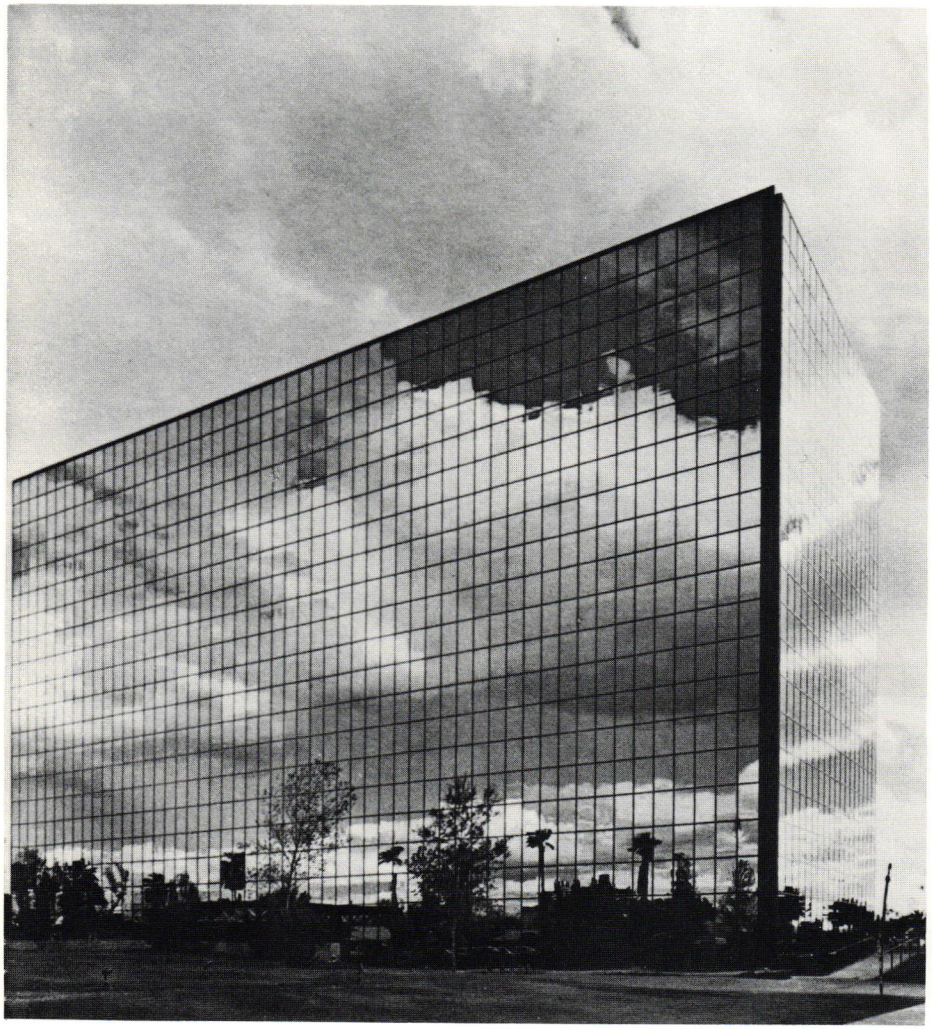
14 L'univers démasqué (*The Unmasked Universe*). *René Magritte.*

15 La condition Humaine (*The Human Condition*). *René Magritte, 1934.*

16 Le clé des songes (*The Key of Dreams*). *René Magritte, 1932.*

17 Le pays des miracles (*The Country of Miracles*). *René Magritte, c. 1960.*



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18 Mountain Bell Plaza, Phoenix, Arizona. Alfred N. Beadle, 1974.

19 Peachtree Center Plaza, Atlanta, Georgia. John Portman, 1976.

a real crisis begins in that the separation between image and language in modern architecture becomes explicit. The mirror is pure image, but the image is not an architectural one. It is completely independent from the problem of figuration in architecture and from architectural codes.

An architecture of mirrors is also looking at other architectures and by force reflecting them, not as metaphoric representation but as literal reflection, and, as a most unusual condition, we have a mirror without its essential element: the subject. The specific context in which the building is inserted takes on the role occupied previously by the subject. This change from the relationship between subject and object to that between text and text exemplifies the break between classicism and modernity as a mode of symbolization.

The architecture of object by the use of mirrors paradoxically negates its own objecthood. This is clear particularly if one considers this architecture in context. The presence of the object is subdued by the fact that it attempts to absorb its context; it is object and context at the same time. Permeated by the qualities of its context, the building seems to replace, literally, its style and materials with an illusory image.

While glass allowed for the visual social penetration of a building, the difference between public and private realms are now back in place. In a mirrored building, the only relationship established with the public realm is by reflection. The negation and elimination of the window precludes an interior/exterior relationship in the building. The building with windows relates more to the exterior than the building with a mirrored facade. Where glass established an almost symmetrical inside/outside relationship by means of the passage of light, mirrors put in frank opposition the relationship between inside and outside.

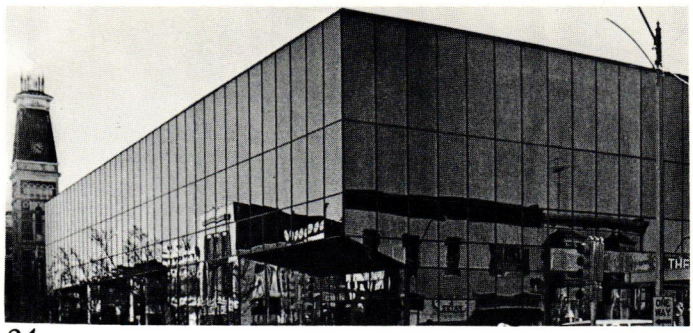
Although mirror architecture reflects the context, it is false contextualization. The object wrapped in mirror remains hermetic to the public world outside; thus the context is "locked" in the mirrored image and it becomes an "imaginary" context. The window has finally disappeared completely (as was intended by Scheerbart)[8] but the building has become hermetic, as though it is recuperating the lost stone wall.

The problem of contextualism is solved as the proof of reality that reconstructs the fragmented image of the city. Architecture has always been thought of as *corps morcelé* in relation to the city. The mirror buildings in an urban context seem to bring a certain recognition of unity to its fragmented body. The mirror building becomes a cutout of reality, and through its unifying reflection creates the illusion of coherence where in fact there is only a set of fragmentary relationships.

In a metonymic operation the mirror building becomes the city. As in Archimboldos' portraits, where the water is represented by a face made of fishes, shells, etc., the building is made of elements of the city — other buildings, ornaments, lights, cars, sidewalks, etc. — and becomes the city itself, or in instances where the sky and other natural elements are reflected, it becomes nature. In opposition to the classical mode of representation, representation becomes literal in this metonymic replacement.

The relationship between architectural language and image has not always been the same. At the time of Quatremère de Quincy, image and language went together in architecture. With the incorporation of the analogous image in architecture, there is a split between architectural language and image. The language of image opposes that of architecture.

The first mirror buildings were mostly boxes of different proportions, but always boxes with mirrored skins



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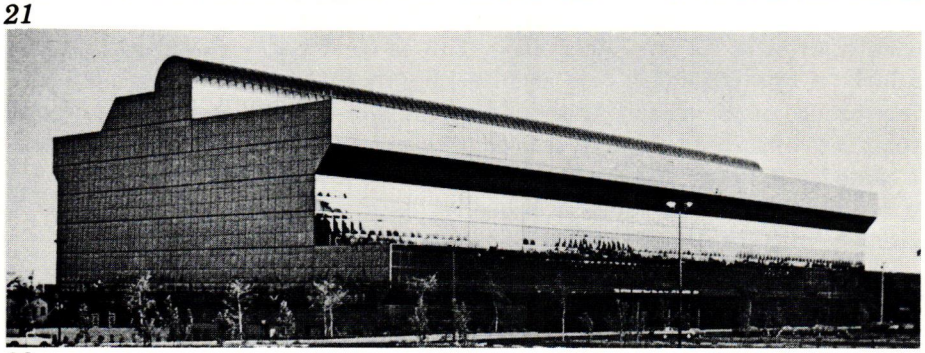

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20 Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, south entrance. Cesar Pelli, 1971.
21 Bonaventure Hotel, Los Angeles. John Portman.
22 Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, west elevation. Cesar Pelli, 1971.
23 Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles. Cesar Pelli, 1971.
24 The Commons, Columbus, Indiana. Gruen Associates, 1976.

to other languages or texts. Glass architecture is within this category; glass does not open to another signifying function for architecture, whereas mirror does. The inversion from glass to mirror is parallel to the change of emphasis from expressionism to surrealism. Perhaps this points to the reduction of meaning through the figurative illusion of transmitting more. The figurative level of the building is increased through the images, but at the same time the architectural specificity is reduced or negated.

The surrealist image and the documentary image meet in the architecture of mirrors with one common feature: the necessity of the word to support or complete the meaning of the image. The surrealist image needs the word to play with the codes of representation and the arbitrariness of language; the documentary image needs the word, the verbalized message, to anchor the meaning where there is no code. These two characteristics are synthesized in the effect produced by the mirror building when, in a documentary manner, it reflects the sky. A major inversion occurs: instead of the building cutting itself against the sky, building and sky are now one, as in Magritte's landscapes of reality.

In the Metropolitan Life Insurance Tower, an Italianate tower in New York of 1909, the glass in its double-hung windows has been replaced recently with mirror glass, creating the extraordinary effect of a hollow tower against the sky. Image and language have joined themselves here in a dialectical manner, symbolizing the transitional role of the architecture of mirror at this moment in the history of architecture.

1. Jacques Lacan, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je, telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'experience psychanalytique" *Ecrits* (Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1966), pp.92-100.
2. Quatremère de Quincy, *De l'imitation*, (Paris, 1823).
3. Mario Gandelsonas, "Notes on Classical Architecture," theory course at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1978.
4. Jurgis Baltrusaitis, "A Museé des Miroirs," *Macula 2* (1977).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*. J.P. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire, psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, (Gallimard, Paris, 1960). E.H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Arts* (Cornell University Pres, 1979). Aloîss Riegl, *Problemi di Stile*, (Feltrinelli Editore, Milan, 1963; original edition, St. Stilfragen, Berlin, 1893).
7. Mario Gandelsonas, *Op. cit.*
8. Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur* (Berlin, Verlag der Sturm, 1914).
9. Roland Barthes, "Le message photographique," *Communications 1*, (Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1963).
10. Roland Barthes, "La rhétorique de l'image, *Communications 4* (Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1964).

Figure Credits
1-4 From Athanase Kircher, *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (Rome, 1646).
5 From Jacques du Breuil, *La perspective pratique* (Paris, 1649).
6-9 From Helena Hayward, *World Furniture* (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1965).
10 From Allan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).
11, 12 From Anthony Blunt, *Baroque and Rococo Architecture and Decoration* (London: Elek, 1978).
13-17 From Harry Torczyner, *Magritte: Ideas and Images* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977).
18 From *Progressive Architecture* (December 1974).
19, 24, 26 From *Progressive Architecture* (June 1976).
20, 22, 23 From *Progressive Architecture* (October 1978).
21 From *Architecture and Urbanism* (January 1979).
25 From *Progressive Architecture* (October 1979).

A Plea for Objectivity for All Occasions

136 To the Editors:

Let me add a critical post-postscript to Elmar Holenstein's "Excursus: Monofunctionalism in Architecture Between the Wars (Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus)," Werner Oeschlin's "Critical Note ... ," and Bernhard Schneider's "Postscript: Non-Functional Functionalism" (all in *Oppositions 24*).

Holenstein's basic premise that functionalism had become "monofunctional," i.e. entirely utilitarian, is itself a monohistorical view of the period between the wars. Werner Oeschlin correctly takes him to task for assuming too literal a concordance between polemical texts and executed buildings. But more important, Holenstein does the texts no justice either. He seems to interpret functionalism at the Bauhaus largely through the writings of Hannes Meyer. The Meyer era at the Bauhaus, though important it may be, represents only a small facet of Bauhaus history, not to speak of architectural developments in Germany in general. Here Holenstein unfortunately simply perpetuates the currently received ideas of what functionalism meant in the twenties. Had he looked beyond such narrow confines, he might have discovered quite a different attitude.

For example, Walter Gropius in his *Internationale Architektur* of 1925 (republished in 1927) spoke about a *Gestaltungswille*, a creative will, under which any utilitarian notions had to be subsumed. Similarly, Adolf Behne in his *Der moderne Zweckbau* (Modern Functional Building), published in 1926, wrote that functionalism could not be equated with utilitarianism. For him, functionalism had to have a metaphysical basis. Ludwig Hilberseimer, even though his designs may be associated with Meyer's brand of technocratic functionalism, in his *Internationale neue Baukunst* of 1927 (expanded edition 1928) wrote that the creative will of the architect dominated everything and that the new architecture was the expression of a spiritual permeation. Even the more conservative Gustav Adolf Platz in his *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* of 1927 (second edition 1930) distinguished between functionalism and utilitarianism and wrote of function as a spiritual, artistic agent. It is clear from these examples that functionalism was perceived in much more idealistic terms than Holenstein suggests. Even by the early thirties when the International Style had become more academic, particularly in the statements of the CIAM, there were still some voices left that alluded to this broader vision of functionalism. Take, for instance, Alberto Sartoris' *Gli Elementi dell' Architettura Funzionale* (The Elements of a Functional Architecture) of 1932 (second edition 1935): functional architecture, according to Sartoris, was characterized by both logic and lyricism, by the practical and the aesthetic, and by matter and spirit.

At best, one could suggest that the notion of functionalism underwent a change between the wars: from a more idealistic attitude to a more utilitarian one. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in *The International Style* of 1932 alluded only to the latter; and it is basically such a restricted notion of functionalism that has come to stand for a period that was far more complex.

Holenstein is playing a game of intellectual subterfuge when he informs us that, in contrast to architects' writings between the wars, linguists and writers on aesthetics in Prague had proposed a humanistic multifunctionalism. Why turn to other disciplines when evidence for a broader concept of functionalism can be found within the statements of architects?

Rosemarie Haag Bletter
Columbia University, New York.

To the Editors:

The philosophical literature on functionalism is unjustifiably confined to the four disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and biology. In the search for new insights I turned to the history of architecture and to linguistics, both of which have had highly disputed "functionalistic" phases. In linguistics I found early expressions of a thoroughly plurifunctional attitude, in the history of architecture a no less stimulating expression of a monofunctional attitude. It is not easy to offer a subtle and balanced analysis of this shortlived monofunctionalism — its creative intellectual value and its enduring practical drawbacks — as the discouragingly partisan distortions of my theses in the postscripts by Werner Oeschlin and Bernard Schneider reveal. Rosemarie Haag Bletter shares and expands the imputations of Oeschlin and Schneider. So, to be short, I restrict my reply to her letter.

Bletter writes, "Oeschlin correctly takes Holenstein to task for assuming too literal a concordance between polemical texts and executed buildings." But Oeschlin simply repeats my own precaution in the central section of my excursus: "Just as instructive as the *innovative* excesses in the direction of monofunctionalism is the *breakup* of the purist program as reflection deepened and *practice* gained the upper hand over *theory*." Bletter espouses Oeschlin's view that these monofunctionalist excesses are to be explained by reference to the pamphlet style of manifestos. In the footnotes of my German text (which Oeschlin and Schneider, who sponsored the English translation, knew as well as they knew its original context) I expressed a more favorable opinion of these innovative excesses. I compared them to Kandinsky's theories and experiments on the isolation of colors and figures: the theoretical and experimental disentanglement of functions played a similarly *heuristic* role. A craving for purification is a common mark of revolutionaries.

Bletter writes, "Holenstein's basic premise [is] that functionalism had become 'monofunctional,' i.e. entirely utilitarian." I wrote the contrary: "Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe were too much the artists to produce *merely utilitarian* edifices, Meyer was too socially engaged and Moholy-Nagy too much a humanist to become bogged down in a *one-dimensional functionalism*." One should not confuse monofunctionalism and utilitarianism. In my introductory example, the English country house, more than twenty different functions are listed, half of them non-utilitarian (gallery, alcove, rose garden, etc.). But why call the attitude behind this clearly *multi*functional house *mono*functional? Because it documents a tendency toward a radical *disentaglement of functions*, a tendency to ascribe to *each part* of the house *one single funtion*. Functionalism was not monofunctional in the (crippling) silly sense that architecture as a whole was assigned just one (utilitarian) function, but in the (creative) crazy sense that each part of the whole should have only one function (Corbu's model; the cars of the twenties). The main intention of my excursus was to show that this conviction ended in a *reductio ad absurdum*, as Kállai's pamphlets so wittily display, and led the "New Bauhaus" in Chicago finally to a position comparable to that of the Prague School in linguistics.

Bletter, however, writes, "Holenstein seems to interpret functionalism at the Bauhaus largely through the writings of Hannes Meyer." She quotes Gropius and disregards the more ample and pertinent quotations of this genius — Gropius — in my paper. She then suggests "that the notion of functionalism underwent a change between the wars: from a more idealistic attitude to a more utilitarian one." This is an infelicitous generalization. The contrary is true for the short history of the Bauhaus itself: it is full of turns and returns, leading from Gropius' threefold 'Vitruvian' functionalism via Meyer's narrow social functionalism and Mies van der Rohe's restoration of Gropius' ideals to Moholy-Nagy's multifaceted, humanist, functionalism.

Elmar Holstein
Bochum, West Germany

Contributors to this Issue

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Alan Colquhoun
Alan Colquhoun was born in England in 1921. He received his degree in architecture from the Architectural Association, London, in 1949. His book Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change *was published by MIT in 1981. He has taught at the Architectural Association, Cornell University, University College in Dublin, the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne, the Polytechnic of Central London, and is now a Professor at Princeton University's School of Architecture.*

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Phillipe Junod was born in Lausanne in 1938. He studied at the University of Lausanne, the Ecole du Louvre, Sorbonne, and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, before receiving his doctorate in 1976 from the University of Lausanne, where he now teaches the history of art. His books include Transparence et opacité: Essai sur les fondements théoriques de l'art moderne *(Lausanne, L'age d'homme, 1976), and* Postface à Jacques Berger *(Lausanne, 1982), and he is published widely in scholarly journals. He is currently working on a monograph on Charles Meryon, and a book on the theme of Icarus in the work of Rodin. He is also an accomplished pianist.*

Errata
The Editors regret that in Giorgio Ciucci's article, "The Invention of the Modern Movement" (Oppositions *24, Spring 1981), figure caption 27 on page 86 was incomplete. The caption should read:*
27 Cover design by Herbert Bayer for José Lluis Sert's book, Can Our Cities Survive? *This book deals with the issues raised at the Fourth CIAM (1933) and the Fifth CIAM (1937), and was published in 1942.*

Acknowledgements
Alan Colquhoun's article *Three Kinds of Historicism* originally appeared in *A.D.* (September/October, 1983).

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Text by Kurt Forster. This volume documents an exhibition entitled *New West Coast Architecture,* sponsored by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in association with the San Francisco Art Institute. Both the exhibition and book examine the aesthetic innovations in recent California built projects, which incorporate new minimalist, materialist, rationalist and symbolist concepts—a style that is distinctly Californian. Among the architects included are Andrew Batey/Mark Mack, Frederick Fisher, Coy Howard, and Studio Works. 120 pages. 8⅜'' x 9¾''. 158 illus., 8 in color. ISBN -0463-1. Paper: $18.50.

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