Reclaiming Context

Architectural Theory, Pedagogy and Practice since 1950

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Reclaiming Context:
Architectural Theory, Pedagogy and Practice since 1950

Proefschrift

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to Onur

who was always with me during this journey

and

to my little Aras

whose birth took me to a new adventure

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Reclaiming Context:
Trajectories in Architectural Theory, Pedagogy and Practice since 1950

Context is a crucial concept in architecture, despite the frequent ambiguity around its use. It is present in many architectural thoughts and discussions, while a critical discursive reflection is absent from contemporary architectural theory and practice. Situated within this schizophrenic condition in which the notion is both absent and present, this study aims at creating a historical and theoretical basis for a contemporary discussion on context. Discussions on context or alike notions had always existed in the field of architecture but the debate intensified and developed as a multi-layered body of knowledge in the 1950s, when various architects, theorists and teachers cultivated several perspectives on context as to address some of the ill effects of modern architectural orthodoxy and the destructive effects of post-war reconstructions. Despite being a topic of layered and productive debate in the post-war years, context lost popularity in the critical architectural discourse of the 1980s when it was absorbed by postmodern historicism and eclecticism, co-opted by traditionalists and conservationists, and consequentially attacked by the neo-avant-gardes for its blinkered understanding. This research presents a critical archaeology of the context debate, aiming to reclaim the notion by uncovering its erased, forgotten and abandoned dimensions. To do so, it challenges the governing paradigm of 1980s postmodern architecture by making inquiries into the history and genealogy of its particular trajectories with a criticism from within. Taking 1980 as a starting point, coinciding with the First Venice Architecture Biennale, the research traces the debate on context back to the 1950s through an in-depth study and interpretation of the ideas and works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Colin Rowe. This reverse chronology reveals that in the works of these protagonists the understanding of context has shifted from “place to memory”, from “spatial to iconographic” and from “layers to object”, where the former categories still hold the capacity to recover the notion as a critical concept that is intrinsic to the architectural design process. In brief, by drawing upon the vast resources available in different media, such as exhibitions, archival materials, student projects, publications, buildings, etc., the study constructs an outline of “the context thinking” as it was articulated in architectural culture in the period between 1950s and 1980s.

SAMENVATTING

De Herovering van de Context:
Trajecten in Architectuurtheorie, Pedagogiek en Praktijk sinds 1950

Het begrip context is een bepalende factor in de architectuur, hoewel vaak nogal dubbelzinnig gebruikt. Het maakt deel uit van vele architectonische beschouwingen en de bijbehorende discussies, echter ontbreekt het binnen het huidige debat aan een kritische blik. Deze schizofrene toestand van het gelijktijdig aan- en afwezig zijn, vormt de uitgangspositie van deze studie die zich toespitst op het scheppen van een gefundeerde theoretische basis voor een hedendaagse discussie over context. Discussies over context of verwante begrippen in de architectuur bestonden er al altijd, maar het debat won aan intensiteit en ontplooide zich tot een gelaagd geheel toen er in de vijftiger jaren door verschillende architecten, theoretici en onderwijskundigen een veelvoud aan inzichten over context werd ontwikkeld om de nadelige gevolgen van de moderniteit en de verwoestende invloed van de naoorlogse wederopbouw in kaart te brengen. Hoewel context als thema in het naoorlogse debat een invloedrijke en productieve rol had gespeeld, verloor het nadien aan zeggingskracht. Met name toen in de jaren tachtig het debat volledig in beslag werd genomen door postmodern historicisme en eclecticisme, daarin bijgestaan door traditionalisten en conservatieven, en voortdurend aangevallen door de neo-avant-garde met beschuldigingen van kortzichtigheid. Dit onderzoek geeft de kritische ontstaansgeschiedenis van het context debat weer en vraagt om een herwaardering van het begrip, waarbij is getracht om de vergeten, verwaarloosde en verdwenen dimensies ervan boven water te krijgen. De aanpak verzet zich tegen de dominante invloed van de postmoderne architectuur uit 1980 en doet naspeuring in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van de specifieke stromingen met een kritische opstelling van binnenuit. Het onderzoek start bij het jaar 1980, het jaar dat samenvalt met de eerste Architectuur Biënnale van Venetië, en volgt het spoor van het context debat terug tot aan de jaren ’50 aan de hand van een diepgaande studie over het werk en de ideeën van respectievelijk Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi en Denise Scott Brown, en Colin Rowe. Het toepassen van een omgekeerde chronologie in dit invloedrijke werk onthult een verschuiving in de betekenis van context van ‘plaats naar herinnering’, van ‘ruimtelijk naar iconografisch’ en van ‘gelaagdheid naar object’, waarbij de aanvankelijke categorieën de mogelijkheid behouden om alsnog te kunnen dienen als een kritisch kader intrinsiek aan het architectonisch ontwerpproces. Kort samengevat, door te putten uit de grote hoeveelheid beschikbare bronnen, waaronder tentoonstellingsmateriaal, archieven, studentenwerk, publicaties, gebouwen, en zo meer, maakt deze studie de omtrek duidelijk van het ‘context denken’ zoals dat in de architectonische cultuur in de periode tussen 1950 en 1980 vorm kreeg.

0. FOREWORD

Every research has its own context. Being born and growing up in Turkey and educated as an architect there, the motivations behind my decision to research the notion of context in architecture have definitely been shaped by my interpretation of the developments in the surrounding built environment, the state of architectural practice and the doctrines of the architectural pedagogy in Turkey. The last decade has seen a vast amount of governmental buildings, such as courthouses, police stations, schools, etc. in Turkey being built in Ottoman or Seljuk revivalist styles. **(Figure 0.1)** These rejuvenated styles can be seen mainly in the facades, the public faces of the buildings, with the claim of being contextual for evoking associations with a glorious past. This transposition of elements is not limited to different periods, but is derived also from different geographies when many thematic projects are considered. Venice is no longer only in Venice, since it can also be found in the new luxurious *Venezia* housing project in Istanbul. Furthermore, it is no longer a problem finding proper or affordable housing along Istanbul's precious Bosporus, since the new *Bosporus City* simulates it even better than the original. **(Figure 0.2)** Knowing that selling experience is more important than selling services and goods in the current state of capitalism, it is no surprise that this project has received the Highly Commended Development Marketing award at the International Property Awards Europe 2011. On the one hand, identities from the distant past or from distinct geographies are imitated through these projects; on the other hand, identities of unique neighbourhoods are continuously destroyed. Regeneration, or better to say gentrification, projects become a means of profiting from the old districts in the city centres by destroying their social and physical contexts and transforming them into high profile settlements. **(Figure 0.3)** New settlements are also created as a result of rapid urbanization and vast construction. The Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) has built 730,000 housing units across Turkey, the majority of which were built after 2002, and the aim is to increase this number to 1.2 million by 2023.[1] Based on standardized apartment types, near identical neighbourhoods have been created, disregarding the distinct social, physical and cultural characteristics of the cities in which they have been built. **(Figure 0.4)** From one perspective, all of these different practices, which have obviously been shaped by local politics and the global neoliberal turn, raise the problem of the relationship between buildings and their social, physical and cultural conditions by abusing, imitating or ignoring context. Architecture has become a commodity since specificity in place and time have become lost, and unfortunately, neither the majority of practicing architects nor the many schools of architecture look to address the political, economic, social and physical predicaments of context in Turkey, relying still on conventions that lead to the design of

[1] The statement of the director of Toki can be accessed from: http://www.toki.gov.tr/content/images/main-page-slider/30102016195157-pdf.pdf

buildings as detached freestanding objects. With all these assessments in the background, this research aims to identify critical interpretations and understandings of context in architectural culture, following its trajectory of rise, decay and partial dismissal from the mainstream Western architectural discourse. The focus on Western sources is not an attempt to claim that a contemporary definition of the relation of architecture-context can solely emerge from Western architectural thinking. Rather it is an attempt to come – in the first place – to a more in-depth understanding of the Western concepts which have been assimilated in amongst others Turkish architectural and urban discourse. That said, genuine ideas are universal as much as they are local, and so any in-depth research on them can help us to extract critical and shared values for the definitions to begin with...

Figure 0.1. A school in Isparta on the left and the courthouse of Kahramanmaraş on the right, both of which have been built in an Ottoman-Seljuk revivalist style. Source: www.moblogankara.org

Figure 0.2. The *Venezia* housing project in Istanbul on the left and the *Bosphorus City* housing project in Istanbul on the right. Sources: www.channelistanbulinvestment.com and www.konuttimes.com

Figure 0.3. Sulukule district of Istanbul, before and after its transformation. Sources: www.siddethikayeleri.com and www.haberler.com

Figure 0.4. From left to right: Houses built by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) in Tekirdag, Samsun and İzmir. Sources: www.konuttimes.com and www.samsunhaber.tc

1. INTRODUCTION

Parts of this introduction and a brief summary of the overall thesis have been published previously as: Esin Komez Daglioglu, “The Context Debate: An Archaeology,” *Architectural Theory Review* 20/2 (2015): 266-279.

“Context” in Contemporary Architectural Discourse

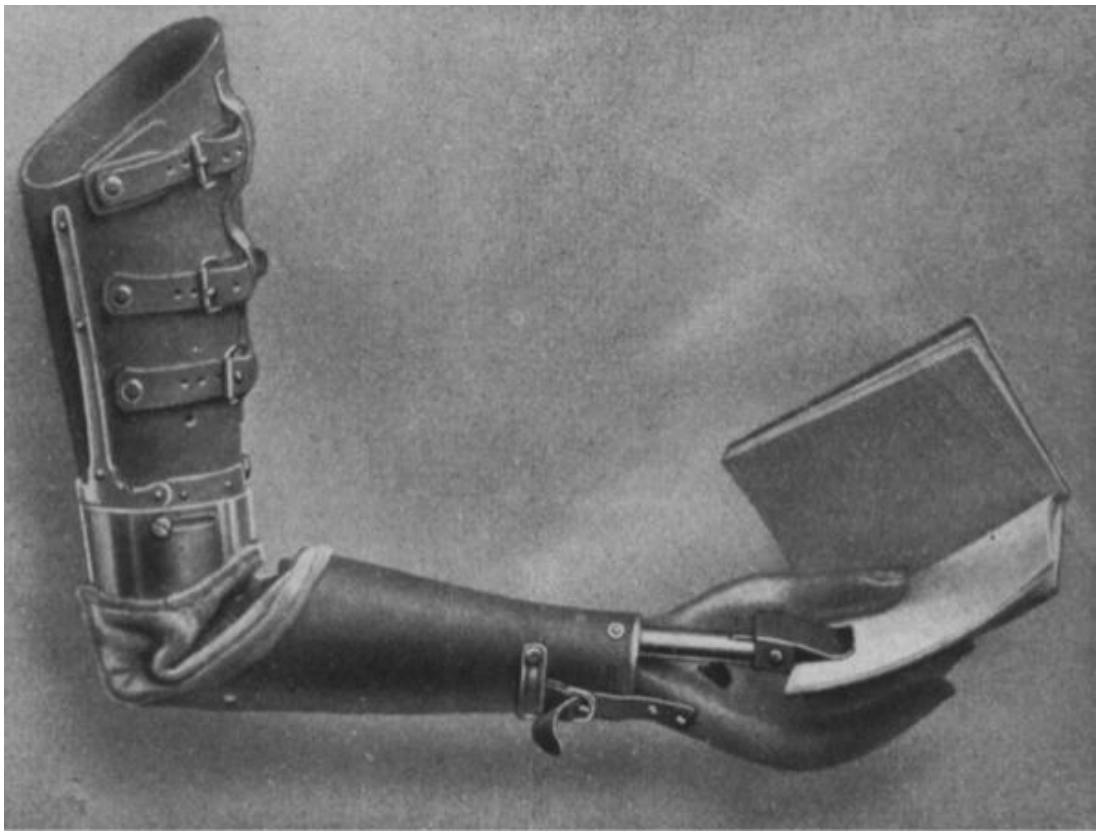

Figure 1.1. Visual metaphor depicting architectural discourse as a prosthesis. Source: Mark Wigley, “Prosthetic Theory: The Disciplining of Architecture,” *Assemblage* 15 (1991): 6.

Architectural discourse has rarely been defined more wittily than through the concept of a prosthesis. Mark Wigley, in his 1991 article “Prosthetic Theory: The Disciplining of Architecture”, introduced a prosthesis as a metaphor to describe both the physical and conceptual extension of architecture into the university, the institutional home of the thesis, where arguments are — as the Greek root *tithenai* suggests — proposed, positioned and defended. **(Figure 1.1)** According to Wigley, “the concept of prosthesis is always already architectural” while “architectural discourse is itself a prosthesis”.[2] Architecture provides metaphors for discussions of a thesis, in that arguments require “grounds”, and build upon stable “foundations”, and so on. Furthermore, much architectural discourse is prosthetic, in that it often artificially attaches itself to or expands upon debates generated in fine arts or sciences. In addition to using prostheses as a metaphor to explain architectural discourse and its institutionalization, Wigley also defined buildings as prostheses, likening the techno-aesthetics of modernist architecture as a technological prosthesis to the contemporary architecture of digital prosthetics. In fact, a building is not only a technological prosthetic extension of the human body, as Wigley presents, but it is also a prosthetic to the social,

[2] Mark Wigley, “Prosthetic Theory: The Disciplining of Architecture,” *Assemblage* 15 (1991): 6-29.

cultural, physical and historical layers of its context. Accordingly, prosthetic architectural discourse can comfortably engage with the emerging paradigms in philosophy, technology, humanities and social sciences, and can just as easily be manipulated, dominated or absorbed by political regimes, underlining the significance of having critical theoretical approaches in the field.

The notions of discourse, theory and criticality have been under attack in the field of architecture since the late 1990s. Defining or defending architecture not as a discourse, but as a practice, proponents of the new architectural pragmatism "assault on something called 'the critical' or 'critical architecture,' usually accompanied by a collateral assault on something called 'theory'."[3] Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's 2002 article "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism" is one of the fundamental essays altering the dominant paradigm of criticality by proposing *projective* architectural practice against.[4] Published first in issue 33 of *Perspecta,* the "Mining Autonomy" issue, and reappearing later in A Harvard Design Magazine Reader's *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, the article challenged the 1990s "critical project" of Michael Hays and Peter Eisenman for whom it is claimed "disciplinarity is understood as autonomy (enabling critique, representation and signification) but not as instrumentality (projection, performativity, and pragmatics)".[5] **(Figure 1.2)** Somol and Whiting refer to Koolhaas as opposed to Eisenman to support their claim for a shift from disciplinarity as "autonomy and process" to "force and effect".[6] The new architectural pragmatism of the 2000s developed on this ground in a move away from the criticality of the 1970s and 1980s and the "empowerment of theory."

In the 1970s, the notion of architectural autonomy was widely disseminated through, among others, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies founded by Eisenman, and its journal *Oppositions*. While many architectural theoreticians and historians such as Manfredo Tafuri viewed autonomy as a resistance to the capitalist cycle of production-distribution-consumption, Eisenman's framing of autonomy sought rather to codify architecture as a self-contained discipline with its own intrinsic formal principles. Defining context as extrinsic to the architectural design process, Eisenman's disciplinary autonomy framed critical architecture as

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[3] Reinhold Martin, "Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism," in *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 150-161.

[4] It is notable that Joan Ockman and Terry Riley's pragmatism conference held at MOMA in 2000 was an earlier attempt to explore the new pragmatism in architecture, published later as *The Pragmatist Imagination: Thinking About Things in the Making*.

[5] Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism," in *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 22-33.

[6] According to George Baird "so many of the protagonists of the currently proffered alternatives to 'criticality' are former protégés of Eisenman, or at least figures at the edge of his circle. Stan Allen, Robert Somol, and Sarah Whiting all fall into one or the other of these categories. To the extent, then, that Eisenman himself has maintained such obdurate loyalty to 'criticality' over a long span of time, he has produced a corresponding tension among his followers in respect to their understandable career efforts to cut loose from him". George Baird, "'Criticality' and Its Discontents," in *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 136-149.

resistant to “external forces”.[7] This argument was expanded by architectural historian and theoretician K. Michael Hays who held a more in-between position. In his article “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form” published in *Perspecta 21* in 1984, Hays, through the works of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, argued for “a critical position between culture as a massive body of self-perpetuating ideas and form supposedly free of circumstance”.[8] Hays argued that architecture should resist both the authority of pre-existing cultural values as well as of the formal systems while efficiently represent the two with its specific situation in real place and time. Here Hays rejected, on the one hand, understanding context as the immediate forces acting upon the architectural form and, on the other hand, understanding form as a disengaged substance from the worldly situation. Although Hays empowered semi-autonomy to define critical architecture that is culturally engaged yet resistant to commercial forces, he undervalued the physical, social and historical context of the architectural work.

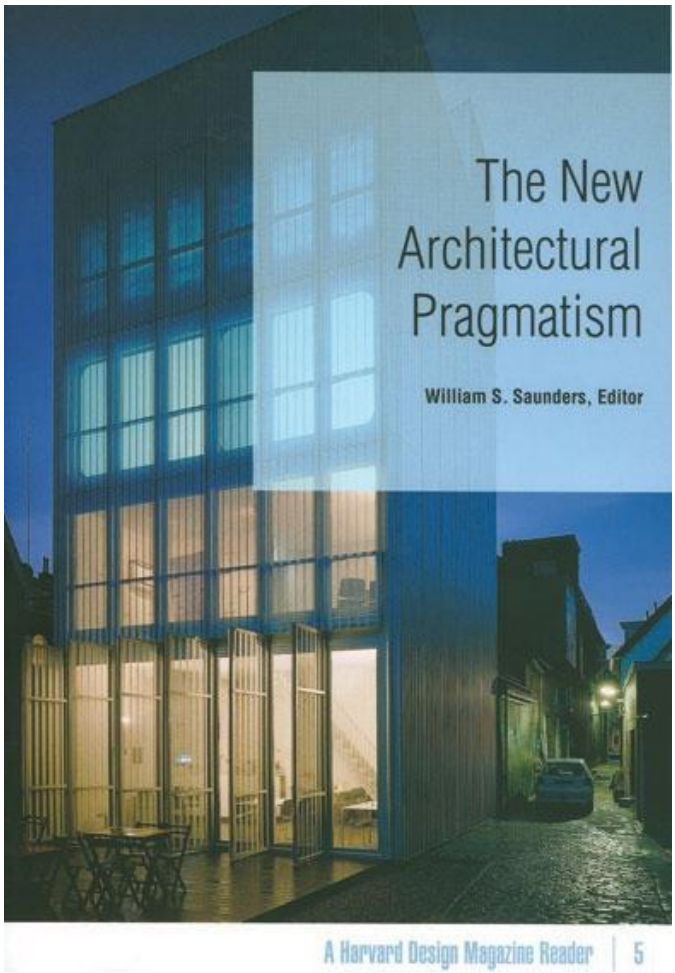

Figure 1.2. *The New Architectural Pragmatism* published in 2007.

[7] See: Alejandro Zaera, “Eisenman’s Machine of Infinite Resistance,” *El Croquis* 83 (1997): 50-63.

[8] K. Michael Hays, “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form,” *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 22.

Against this background, the new architectural pragmatists such as Somol and Whiting claim today that an *engaged* architectural practice exists that "does not necessarily entail a capitulation to market forces, but actually respects or reorganizes multiple economies, ecologies, information systems and social groups".[9] Hence, in their viewpoint context can be understood as the various forces that encompass the design process. Although the new architectural pragmatists signify the role of context as forces, they are unwilling to generate a critical, theoretical and discursive reflection on context since they are against criticality, which they associate with theory, and theory as the generative of understanding architecture as discourse, which they oppose fiercely. Taking a contrasting position, pragmatist architects can ignore contextual concerns in order to operate (value-)freely in different territories under contradictory political regimes and social conditions, as their protagonist Koolhaas' "fuck context" statement proclaims.[10] Equating criticality and theory with Eisenman's call for autonomy, new pragmatists choose to abandon them. In fact, theory, criticality, and discourse do not need to be discarded for a more engaged practice. A reassessment of context, the theoretical elaboration of which came some decades before both the doctrine of autonomy and the current pragmatism, reveals why this might be the case. The term "context", meaning literally "weaving together", was introduced to the field of architecture in the middle of the last century to draw attention to the relationality of the individual structure with the broader physical, social, cultural, historical, etc. conditions in which it exist. In this respect, it goes beyond the sheer matters of visual and material compatibility with surrounding built environments. An archaeology of the context debate would show how engaged architectural practice could embody criticality, which denotes involving careful judgments of and positioning towards the interrelated conditions in which the architectural design came into existence, and theory while engaging in architecture as a prosthetic discourse. But first, it is necessary to understand what led to context being dismissed from critical architectural discourse after the 1980s.

A Brief Overview of Postmodern Contextualism

To reclaim theory and criticality for architecture as a discourse, the attributed link between critical architecture and Eisenman's autonomy project has to be broken.[11] From a broader perspective, 1980s "critical architecture" was positioned as being opposed to contextualism,

[9] Somol and Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect," 32.

[10] Koolhaas, when discussing large buildings, stated: "bigness is no longer part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is fuck context". Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau and Hans Werlemann, *SMLXL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 502.

[11] Arguing "for (a) theory (of architecture)" today, Manuel J. Martín-Hernández criticizes architectural theory from Vitruvius to Eisenman for being prescriptive, and proposes that "a contingent and open theory would therefore be the answer to the [neopragmatists'] denial of theory altogether". Manuel J. Martín-Hernández, "For (a) theory (of architecture)", *The Journal of Architecture* 13:1 (2008): 6.

an emerging popular approach in architecture back then, at a time when there were two mainstream understandings of contextualism. First, it was associated with Colin Rowe's contexturalism, in which emphasis was on urban texture, an approach that was developed and distributed through his Cornell studio teachings in the 1970s as later was mentioned in many architectural anthologies that were published extensively in the late 1990s, such as Kate Nesbitt's *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture, An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995,* and Michael Hays' *Architecture Theory Since 1968*.[12] Following Rowe's approach, contextualism was linked to an eclectic formal language in the 1970s that was found most explicitly in the works of James Stirling, who was closely connected to Rowe himself.[13] **(Figure 1.3)** Kenneth Frampton's "Stirling in Context" and Charles Jencks' "Towards Radical Eclecticism" can be counted among the articles in which contextualism was defined as *heterostylism,* as put forward by Stirling.[14] In this line of discussion, contextualism is considered as one of the expressions of postmodern eclectic formalism. In fact, the architects that would later form the postmodern camp introduced context thinking in previous decades as a rich layered phenomenon, although it lost its distinctive character within the postmodern architectural discussions of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and was later co-opted by the preservationists and conservationists.

Figure 1.3. James Stirling, Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Source: Image Courtesy of Nieuwe Musea, www.archdaily.com

[12] Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture, An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) and Michael Hays, ed., *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

[13] For Rowe's influence on the architecture of James Stirling, see: Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 61-106.

[14] Kenneth Frampton, "Stirling in Context*:* Buildings and Projects 1950-1975," *RIBA Journal* 83 (1976): 102-104 and Charles Jencks, "Towards Radical Eclecticism," in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 30-37.

Contextualism began to be associated mainly with conformity and visual compatibility with surrounding built environments in the governing architectural discourse of the 1980s. In the United States, under the growing influence of the American Preservationist Movement, professional discussions had begun to revolve around the integration of new buildings into their historical surroundings. Keith Ray, in his 1980 book *Contextual Architecture: Responding to Existing Style*, spoke about an increasing familiarity with the terms reservation, restoration, adaptive use and contextual design due to the growing interest in historical buildings in America. He stated that:

> To remain of service to society, these [historical buildings] have to be modified for new uses – or new buildings have to be inserted among the existing ones to maintain the living fabric of our cities. But modification to existing buildings and new buildings cognizant of their surroundings present unfamiliar design relationships between the new and old. Contextual design, designing in relation to the context, then, is the point of this book. It elucidates the design relationship between old and new buildings by illustrating the variety of options available.[15]

Brent Brolin criticized modernism's disregard of context, and its break with the past and the doctrine of the spirit of time.[16] **(Figure 1.4)** He emphasized the importance of visual continuity, defining it as one of the most important tasks of architects, planners and developers. The role of form, scale, ornamentation, materials and details were discussed, fitting the works of architecture into their contexts. Linda Groat, in her 1983 essay "Measuring the Fit of New to Old", developed a checklist for architects covering the items to be considered when fitting new buildings into old neighborhoods,[17] and later, in her 1984 essay "Public Opinions of Contextual Fit", she emphasized the importance of using elements derived from the façade organizations of the surrounding buildings in the new designs.[18] In the dissertation "Contextualism: Fitting New Buildings to Their Surroundings", completed in 1989, Zuhair Hatim Attia Al-Izzi discussed the problem of contextual fitness and emphasized the significance of the formal and symbolic association between a building and its surrounding in achieving sympathetic fitness.[19] As these publications, which are just some of the many that appeared in the United States in the 1980s, show, contextualism increasingly became identified as a matter of "fitting in", which reduced the understanding of context to a single and simplistic design approach where its previous multiple definitions slowly disappeared from the debate.

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[15] Keith Ray, *Contextual Architecture: Responding to Existing Style* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980), viii.

[16] Brent Brolin, *Architecture in Context: Fitting New Buildings with Old* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1980).

[17] Linda Groat, "Measuring the Fit of New to Old," *Architecture* 72 (1983): 58-61.

[18] Linda Groat, "Public Opinions of Contextual Fit," *Architecture* 73 (1984): 72-75.

[19] Zuhair Hatim Attia Al-Izzi, "Contextualism: Fitting New Buildings to Their Surroundings" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989).

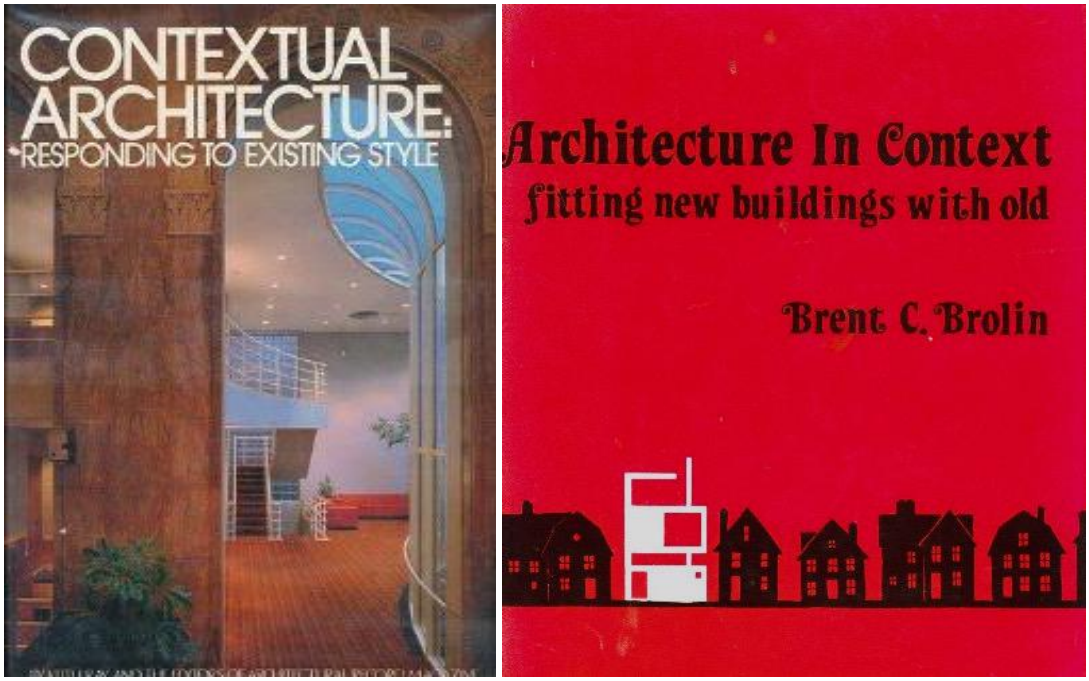

Figure 1.4. Keith Ray's *Contextual Architecture: Responding to Existing Style* (1980) and Brent Brolin's *Architecture in Context: Fitting New Buildings with Old* (1980).

In England, Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, endorsed a policy in the 1980s of sympathetically tailoring the visual fit of new architecture to established neighborhoods. He advocated neo-traditional principles in urban design, as elaborated and disseminated through the Prince's Foundation for Building Community (formerly the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture from 1986–2001 and The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment from 2001–2012).[20] **(Figure 1.5)** One of his first interventions into architectural culture was in 1984, when he gave a speech at the *Royal Institute of British Architects* (RIBA) on its 150th anniversary in which he attacked modernist architect Peter Ahrends' proposed extension to the National Gallery in London, referring to it as a "monstrous carbuncle".[21] Prince Charles' architectural vision arguing for a subtle reconnection to tradition and nature, published in *The Architectural Review* in 2014, concluded with a proposal for 10 principles in urban design: "respect to land, architecture as language, attention to scale (human propositions), achieving harmony through diversity, well-designed enclosures, drawing on local building materials, reducing the use of signs and lights, pedestrian-centered designs, achieving density and flexibility".[22] His principles pointed towards an understanding of new architectural and urban projects as the consolidation of traditionally built harmonious urban contexts.

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[20] See the website of The Prince's Foundation for Building Community: http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/the-prince-of-wales/the-princes-charities/the-princes-foundation-building-community

[21] Full text of Prince Charles's speech at the 150th anniversary of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) can be accessed from the webpage of *The Prince of Wales: http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/media/speeches/speech-hrh-the-prince-of-wales-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-royal-institute-of*

[22] Prince Charles's ten principles for urban design can be accessed from the webpage of *The Architectural Review*: http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/facing-up-to-the-future-prince-charles-on-21st-century-architecture/8674119.article

Figure 1.5. Poundbury, which is built on Prince of Wales's principles of urban design as advocated in his book *A Vision of Britain* (1989). Source: photo by Flickr CC user Jonathan L. Clarke, http://www.archdaily.com/582691/prince-charles-10-geometric-principles-for-architecture-cause-a-stir-in-the-uk

Beginning in the 1980s, this rather reductive and blinkered understanding of context was criticized by the neo-avant-gardes and by so-called "critical architects", the proponents of the autonomy debate in architecture as Peter Eisenman and Mark Wigley, who associated contextualism with uniformity and conformity.[23] Eisenman's "autonomy" was proposed in opposition to contextual theories, and in addition to his attack on contextual practices, the critique of contextualism, aired by many architects, theoreticians, and philosophers, was also motivated by a more general disapproval of postmodern architecture. For instance, Paul-Alan Johnson, in his book *The Theory of Architecture*, criticized attention for context that imposes conformity and continuity in the built environments by being historicist and authoritarian.[24] Political theorist Fredric Jameson, in "The Constraints of Postmodernism", criticized "postmodernism's more general contextualism" by identifying its call for difference as a by-product of the multinational capitalism that it claimed to oppose.[25] In 1988, avant-garde architects gathered at MOMA's Deconstructivist Architecture Exhibition to attack postmodernism and its contextualism, and in the catalogue of the exhibition, curators Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley asserted that "contextualism had been used as an excuse for

[23] See, for instance, Eisenman's "Introduction" to Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* and Wigley and Johnson's text published at the catalogue of the 1988 *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition at MOMA.

[24] Paul-Alan Johnson, *The Theory of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994), 284-287.

[25] Fredric Jameson, "The Constraints of Postmodernism," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 237.

mediocrity, for a dumb servility to the familiar".[26] By way of contrast, they argued, their avant-garde architecture was critically distant from any authority claimed by the context of an architectural object.

The Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition in MOMA hosted the works of Coop Himmelb(l)au, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi, who are labeled today as starchitects, being known globally as producers of iconic buildings designed as detached spectacular objects celebrating architecture's de-territorialisation. **(Figure 1.6)** At a recent panel discussion for the 25th anniversary of the exhibition, Wigley asked: "Could an exhibition similar to Deconstructivist Architecture happen today? Does today's architectural climate invite a genre-defining moment?"[27] Tschumi's answer, as reported by John Hill, was interesting, since he "asserted that there is nothing today to battle, like postmodern architecture 25 years ago, but then he offered that a show now would be called 'Iconism', addressing the obsessions of architects to make icons."[28] Tschumi thereby called for an exhibition criticizing the position that he and his peers had endorsed implicitly a quarter of a century ago. While postmodernism had come under attack after the 1980s due to its conformist and superfluous contextualism, Tschumi's comments made it clear that context in architecture needed to be revisited.

Figure 1.6. CCTV building from the old Beijing. Source: Photo by Philippe Ruault, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/13/arts/design/koolhaass-cctv-building-fits-beijing-as-city-of-the-future.html

[26] Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson, *Deconstructivist Architecture*: *The Museum of Modern Art* (New York, Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 17.

[27] John Hill, "Deconstructivist Architecture, 25 Years Later," *World-architects E-magazine*, 01.28.2013. Last accessed, 24 May, 2016. http://www.world-architects.com/pages/insight/deconstructivist-architecture-25

[28] Hill, "Deconstructivist Architecture, 25 Years Later."

What is "Context"?

As the brief summary of the approaches from the 1970s and 1980s show, contextualism, which like many other –isms became associated with a rather simplistic design approach, defined the design of buildings in reference to the style, height, size, material, etc. of the surrounding buildings, or to fit into the cityscape. By doing so, it erased other dimensions of the notion of context, which has a much broader and complex definition that can be framed in two levels. First, as its dictionary definition suggests, the notion of context refers to "the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood."[29] In other words, context can be defined as the discourse or parts of a discourse that surrounds a thing, explicitly or implicitly affects its process of making and offers political, social, historical, economic, etc. frame of references to interpret its meaning. This situated understanding of a thing challenges the idea of autonomy especially in art, which considers the fact that objects have their own independent life and self-governed interpretation after they left the studio of the artists. The fallaciousness of this assumption can be well illustrated in the works of German artist Käthe Kollwitz.

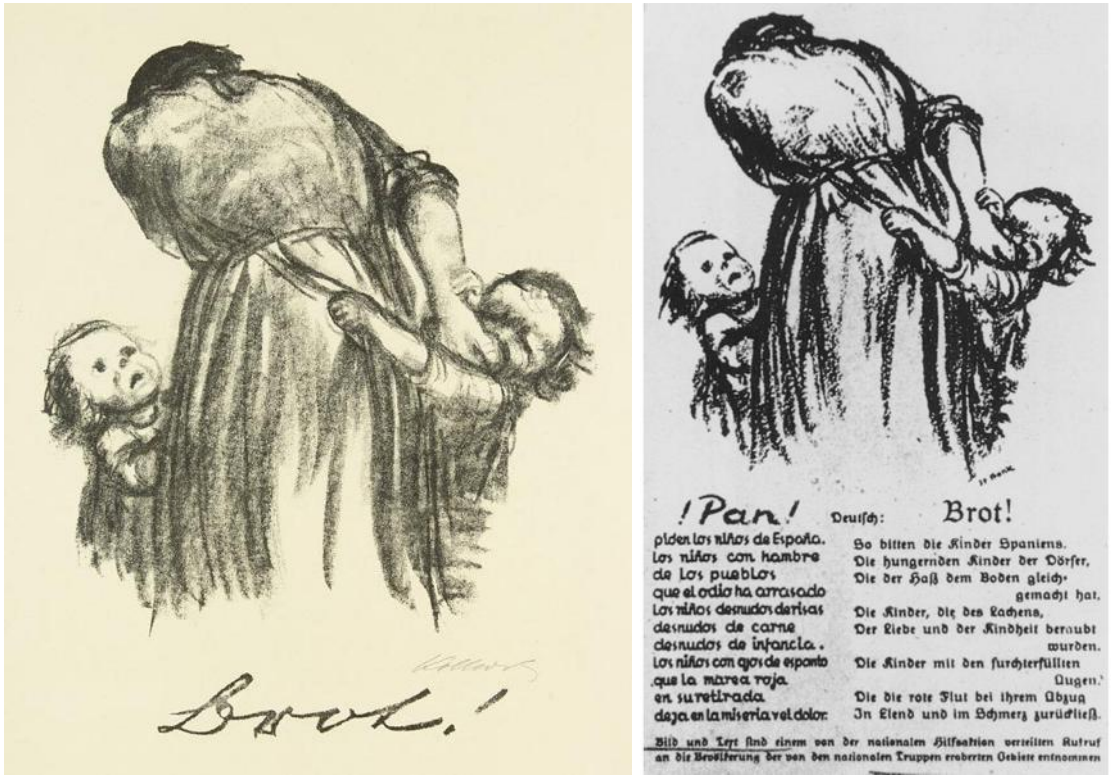

Figure 1.7. Left: Käthe Kollwitz's lithograph *Brot!*,1924. Right: Reprint of *Brot!* In *NS Frauen Warte* with the signature of St. Frank, 1937. Source: Otto Nagel, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 117, 81.

[29] Context, Oxford English Dictionary. Last accessed, 28 November, 2016. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/context.

Kollwitz was one of the most significant German artist of the 20th century and the first woman to be elected to the Berlin Academy of Art and given the title professor. Following the World War I, she created many prints and drawings on the variations of the theme hunger in the 1920s in order to protest against the poor conditions of working class in Germany. She aimed to draw attention to starvation by preparing posters depicting women and children such as *Brot!* (Bread!) and *Deutschlands Kinder Hungern!* (Germany's Children Starve!).[30] After 1933, when Hitler and the Nazi Party came into power and established the totalitarian national socialist regime in Germany, Kollwitz was expelled from the Berlin Academy of Art and banned from exhibiting her works. However, her works continued to be circulated for different reasons and with different attributed meanings. In addition to the reproduction of her *Hunger* series in a Nazi fascist journal for a campaign against communism, *Bread!* was reprinted in the National Socialist Women journal *NS Frauen Warte* with the sign St. Frank for pro-Nazi propaganda.[31] **(Figure 1.7)** Hence, publishing the same image in different social, political and historical contexts triggered different interpretations for these works of art. In this regard, context here can be broadly defined as the frame of references that had an influence in the production of a work of art (e.g. poor conditions of working class in Berlin in the 1920s influenced Kollwitz's works to draw attention to this phenomena) and that shapes the meaning of a thing (e.g. reproduction of Kollwitz's posters for Nazi propaganda in the 1930s lead to different interpretations). Therefore, context is both an element in the production of art and in its reception and is important to be analysed to understand and display the motives behind these two. This more general description of the word context is an important concept in this research too to shed light on the underlying social, political, academic, etc. developments that affect the various definitions and interpretations of context in architecture.

This study dwells more specifically on the architectural use of the notion context, which could be defined broadly as the situatedness and engagement of an architectural design in the interrelated conditions of its setting. These conditions could be physical, social, cultural, geographical, etc. or the combinations of them. Hence, if context is taken as an intrinsic aspect of architectural design process, then architecture could be defined as the material manifestation of the positioning towards these interrelated conditions in which it came into existence. However, architecture's relationality to the conditions of its setting is not pre-defined per se but invented and constructed. In this regard, context is not a given frame of reference but is about framing the references. Context is an inherent property of architectural design and has been entwined with many other notions in the history of architecture. Sometimes it was associated merely with the physical aspects of a site such as climate, light, topography, etc. while at other times a more cultural understanding was attributed to it through the use of traditional local forms and motives. Although the aim of this study is not to

[30] For the life and works of Käthe Kollwitz, see: Elizabeth Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[31] Otto Nagel, *Käthe Kollwitz* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1963), 81.

offer a broad mapping of the different definitions of context and related concepts as emerged in the history of architecture, a brief summary below could provide some insights regarding the multiplicity and complexity of context-thinking in architecture, which unfortunately has rarely been addressed in contemporary discussions.

Having the potential to encapsulate a definition beyond the physical features of a site, context is embedded in the old notion *genius loci* or "spirit of place", which has been used to describe one of the most essential qualities of ancient Roman architecture. In Renaissance architecture, *decorum*, inherited from Vitruvius' *décor*, was developed as a key strategy for communication with context through symbolism.[32] Ecole des Beaux-Arts introduced *tirer parti*, meaning making the best of what is found in the existing physical and political context, although this was later dominated by *prendre parti,* prioritizing freestanding objects.[33] Freestanding and mass produced buildings later became a canon of modernist architecture, in which the previous implications of context were altered by the *tabula rasa* approach, breaking with history and tradition, designing from inside out, and so on. However, modernism's projective and emancipatory dimensions were questioned deeply after the two world wars of the 20th century, which cast a cloud over the legacy and supremacy of orthodox modern architecture. Triggered by the destructive post-war reconstructions that destroyed the built environment as much as the war itself in Europe, new definitions of context were reintroduced in the early 1950s, with the principal aim being a cross-fertilization of the progressive dimension of modernist architecture by cultivating the existing circumstances rather than projecting a utopian ideal.

Hence, during the post-war years, a broader set of concepts that are related to the notion context were introduced especially in philosophy and geography. To begin with, Martin Heidegger, one of the most influential philosopher of the 20th century, offered a more phenomenological approach to being and space as oppose to nihilism triggered by modern technology. Problematizing situatedness of human beings in the world through the question of *dasein* and Being in his philosophy, Heidegger also commented on buildings' situatedness in his widely influential article "Building, Dwelling, Thinking".[34] In this article, Heidegger argued that to build is to dwell and dwelling is "the basic character of human being" for expressing man's situatedness in the world.[35] Heidegger gave bridge as an example to discuss the situatedness of buildings as dwellings. According to him, bridge is not located at a pre-given space but is itself a location that enable a space for gathering the fourfold: earth and heaven,

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[32] Peter Kohane and Michael Hill, "The Eclipse of a Commonplace Idea: Decorum in Architectural Theory," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 5:1 (2001): 63-76.

[33] Robin Dripps, "Groundwork," in *Site Matters*, ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn (New York: Routledge, 2005), 59-91.

[34] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 2005), 95-119.

[35] Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 95-96.

divinities and mortals. “Thus the bridge does not first come to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.”[36] Here, Heidegger opposes the understanding of location, site and place as a priori concepts in architecture. Instead, building is defined as a location and place per se, which itself allows a site for it.

Heideggerian ontology also influenced other fields such as geography where new concepts were developed to discuss the humankind’s situatedness on earth. After reading Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927), the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō introduced the concept *Fūdo*, which was published as a book with the same title in 1935 and, after half a century, has been widely discussed and disseminated through the writings of the French geographer Augustin Berque.[37] Berque translated Watsuji’s term *Fūdo* as milieu, which was one of the conceptual foundations of the French School of Geography in the 20th century, meaning “environment, state of life, social surrounding.”[38] At a recent talk, Berque related the discussion to architecture by arguing that modern architecture abstracted the Being from place by searching a universal space and this is “the exact contrary of concrete milieux, which necessarily are heterogeneous (since all concrete places are different and singular), anisotropic (since, concretely, up is not down, forward is not backward, and right is not left), and finite (since, everywhere on this planet, there necessarily is a horizon).”[39] Therefore, the notion milieu, which has long been in use in biology, geography, social history, etc., was brought into architecture to highlight the significance of building’s situatedness on both the Earth and our human world.[40]

Heidegger’s phenomenological philosophy also influenced architecture directly, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, most prominently through the writings of the Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz. Since its publication in 1980, Norberg-Schulz’s book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* has become a reference source in architectural phenomenology.[41] In the preface to the book, he wrote, “architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.”[42] Thus Norberg-Schulz was aiming at

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[36] Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 100.

[37] See: Augustin, Berque. "Watsuji Tetsuro's definition of mediance as 'the structural moment of human existence' and its meaning for geography today," *Kikan Chirigaku* 52/3 (2000): 239-244; Augustin Berque, “The Japanese Thought of Milieu (*Fūdo*); From Peculiarism to the Quest of the Paradigm,” in *Interpretationsmodelle der Japanischen Gesellschaft,* ed. Josef Kreiner and Hans Dieter Oelschleger (Tokyo: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, 1996), 61-79; Augustin, Berque, “The Question of Space. From Heidegger to Watsuji,” *Ecumene* 3/4 (1996): 343-383.

[38] Augustin Berque, “Offspring of Watsuji’s Theory of Milieu (Fūdo),” *Geojournal* 60 (2004): 389-396.

[39] Augustin Berque, “Can We Recosmize Architecture?” Keynote Lecture at the Japanese Institute of Architects 2014 Congress, Okayama. Last accessed, 28 November, 2016. http://ecoumene.blogspot.nl/2014/12/can-we-recosmize-architecture-berque.html

[40] For a broad mapping of the use of the term, see: Georges Canguilhem and John Savage, “The Living and Its Milieu,” *Grey Room* 3 (2001): 6-31.

[41] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1980).

[42] Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 5.

finding the existential meaning of architecture, which he thinks rooted in nature and could be made manifest through visualizing, complementing and symbolizing man's understanding of nature while respecting, conserving and revealing the spirit of each place. Similar to Heidegger's definition of building as a location which allows a site to become a place, Norberg-Schulz argued that "the existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment."[43] In the end, his main goal was to develop a "theory of place," which is strongly tied to nature and the human experience that is originated from it rather than the complexity of contemporary urbanity.

In the early 1980s, Kenneth Frampton developed a new framework for architecture with his theory of Critical Regionalism, which was also studied by some scholars under the umbrella of architectural phenomenology.[44] His substantial article "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" begins with a long quotation from the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's *History and Truth,* which ends with the question "how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization."[45] Published in 1965, Ricoeur's passage dwelled on the unresolved conflict between the encounter of local traditional cultures with the universal civilization.[46] Departing from this assessment, Frampton proposed Critical Regionalism as a strategy in architecture "to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived *indirectly* from the peculiarities of a particular place."[47] Against tabula rasa approach of modernism, he emphasized the significance of context, understood mainly as the physical and material conditions of a site such as topography, light, climate, tectonics, etc. While mentioning his scepticism against "grounding critical practice in a concept so hermetically metaphysical as Being," Frampton referred to Heidegger's article "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" for its call for a bounded domain against universal placelesness.[48] Frampton's theory of Critical Regionalism and his manifesto like essay has already gained a prominent place in the history of architecture. However, its underlying critique of the local-universal distinction cannot be viewed as a dichotomy today since both of their place-making strategies are dictated mainly by the global market economy.

All these above-mentioned philosophical, geographical and architectural approaches cultivated new frameworks during the post-war and postmodern years that are directly or

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[43] Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci,* 18.

[44] See: Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[45] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 16.

[46] Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *History and Truth*, ed. Paul Ricoeur (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 271-284.

[47] Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism," 21.

[48] Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism," 25.

tangentially related to the discussion on context in architecture. Although milieu, critical regionalism, *genius loci*, etc. were all related concepts with the notion context, they hardly derived from and reflect on the architecture of the city and urban conditions, which is the interest of this research due to their complexity and substantial role in accommodating and shaping the modern life. In this regard, this study dwells more on the understanding of context as having an immanent quality to project a theory of the city. Context is therefore introduced as a crucial concept for highlighting the significance of and also showing the possible approaches for positioning an architectural work within the city while bringing new theoretical perspectives to frame what the city is or would be (as the context of architecture). Moreover, context-thinking helps defining architecture as an engaged discipline, not engaged only to the interrelated conditions of its urban setting but also to the knowledge in different fields and practices since it concerns multiple dimensions related to built environments and human subjects. This study offers a close reading of the term as an operative notion in post-war and postmodern architecture by showing how it was charged through the different references within the field of architecture as well as the intellectual developments in other fields, which were sometimes well understood, sometimes misinterpreted but always productive and propelling in the field of architectural thinking and practice.

Since the understanding of context was reduced to contextualism as a single-minded design approach in the 1980s, very little discussion and research on the subject have been made in architecture since the 1990s. One of the most intense debates on contextualism was introduced in the 74th volume of *Lotus* published in 1992, which opened with an introductory essay "Contextualism?", which associated contextualism in architecture with hermeneutics in philosophy. Among the nine contributors, Vittorio Gregotti was the most critical about the subject, defining two vices of architecture. The first of these was the "improper use of philosophical reflection and the habit of creating a short-circuit between the ideas of latter and questions of architecture," in which he addressed the misleading link between hermeneutics and contextualism, and the second was "the task of distinguishing what falls to criticism," in which he referred to the "vulgar interpretation of pluralism" in the name of contextualism.[49] He criticized the use of contextual empirical conditions for the legitimization of architectural works, the quality of which lies in their critical distance from the context, according to Gregotti. On the other hand, Pietro Derossi found the influence of hermeneutics on contextualism useful for developing "the awareness that each work is the fruit of an exhausting effort to find it a place in the tangle of a preexisting condition (of facts and thoughts)."[50] Like Gregotti, Paolo Portoghesi was also critical of the notion of contextualism, although his concern was not the distance from the context, as argued by Gregotti, but rather its reductive definition. Hence, he favoured the notion place against the terms contextualism, and "adapting to the setting,"

[49] Vittorio Gregotti, "The Vices of Architects," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 112-113.

[50] Pietro Derossi, "The Thingness of Things," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 114-116.

which he found problematic, claiming that it limited one to the immediate physical surroundings by betraying "one of the historical tasks of architecture, which is to establish a relationship between different experiences and traditions."[51]

Other articles mentioned the limited definitions attributed to contextualism, including that of Jacques Lucan, who defined contextual architecture as a "critical commentary" that takes into account the realities of particular contexts while sustaining a "demand for universality" by using contemporary means of technology.[52] Romuald Loegler addressed two blinkered understanding of contextualism, being "criticism of civilization and technology" and "nostalgic return to the existing", arguing that "the context – an important aspect of architecture – with no binding principles of style, should be understood in a multiple way – in respect to ideas, politics, history, culture, as well as through the aesthetic values – in a wide spectrum of perception."[53] Denise Scott Brown criticized first the Modernist's understanding of context – although they never used the term – as a landscape, in which buildings either "stood against or nestled into".[54] She discussed her "learning from" studies with Robert Venturi, and their understanding of context as a broader social, cultural, symbolic, historical and economic phenomena. Defining context as everyday life, Frank Werner questioned the history of architecture for its dismissal of the contextual – the everyday – while glorifying the architecture of indifference that "stands out in splendor against the background of historical and cultural sedimentation".[55] Some other authors attributed context with an authoritarian role in architectural design. Antoine Grumbach, for instance, claimed that contextualism was an "unavoidable necessity", since the meaning of a building can be grasped "by its syntagmatic dimensions, that is to say by its association with something in the context".[56] Giorgio Grassi, on the other hand, defined context as a place to which buildings adopt, arguing that "the place teaches us, makes demands on us, and sometimes decides for us".[57]

Jane Wolford's PhD dissertation entitled "Architectural Contextualism in the Twentieth Century, with Particular Reference to the Architects E. Fay Jones and John Carl Warnecke", completed at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2004, is one of the more recent studies of contextualism. In her dissertation, Wolford identified the origins of contextualism, dwelling upon the critique of the three tenets of Modernism (rationality, functionality, universality) and its shortcomings (failure to respond to physical needs, insufficiency in responding

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[51] Paolo Portoghesi, "Setting and Spirit of the Time," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 116-118.

[52] Jacques Lucan, "Contextualism and Universality," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 110-111.

[53] Romuald Loegler, "Defining the Value of the Site," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 118-120.

[54] Denise Scott Brown, "Talking about the Context," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 125-128.

[55] Frank Werner, "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?" *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 120-125.

[56] Antoine Grumbach, "The Syntagmatic Passion," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 113-114.

[57] Giorgio Grassi, "Reconstruction of the Place," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 128-131.

psychological needs and narrow focus in aesthetics). She argued that a proper understanding of the "importance, elements and techniques" of contextualism was required for the creation of better built environments, although her depiction of the elements of contextualism, being "specific siting, general locale, shape, size, color of material, texture of material, type of material, position, style, rhythm of elements, scale/proportion, identity", again fell within the conventional understanding of the approach related to visual harmony and conformity with the surrounding built environments.[58] Furthermore, formulating guidelines and checklists for contextual architecture inhibits the development a more nuanced and critical discussion of context.

The blinkered understanding of the notion of context triggered a search for new vocabularies in contemporary architectural theory and practice. George Dodds, in his 2001 article "Architecture as Instauration", argued that *instauration* is a more comprehensive term than contextualism, since it recognizes the cultural and temporal realities of sites.[59] *Field,* introduced mostly through the writings of Stan Allen (e.g. his essay "From Object to Field" published in 1997), is another new concept proposed to replace the word context. In the *Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*, the notion of context was replaced with field, with the explanation that it was a more generative term: "the notion of 'field' in reference to place – and not that of 'context' or, at least, that of 'contextual' – suggests a new, more open and abstract, more flexible and receptive (reactive) condition of the contemporary project vis-à-vis the environment, far removed from classical evocation or modern (im)position".[60] The authors of the 2005 book *Site Matters* discuss the importance of site-related issues in architecture, and propose the use of the word *site* in place of context, defining it as a more open relational construct. Sandy Isenstadt's essay "Contested Contexts", which appeared in the same book, provided a brief mapping of the evolution of the term context, and concluded by noting some limitations of the term, "In the United States today, taking up the issue of context implies a formal profile, directing attention to the past by directing it toward existing surroundings, especially in comparison with *site,* a more general term without a specific formal trajectory".[61] The recently published *Site Specific* also dwells on the notion of site to address the specificity of the architectural projects designed by such practitioners as Steven Holl, Bjarke Ingels and Patrick Schumacher.[62] While bringing together these dispersed *situated* practices is a significant effort, the specificity of these fragmented approaches and

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[58] Jane Wolford, "Architectural Contextualism in the Twentieth Century, with Particular Reference to the Architects E. Fay Jones and John Carl Warnecke" (PhD diss., Georgia Institute of Technology, 2004).

[59] George Dodds, "Architecture as Instauration," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 5:2 (2001): 126-150.

[60] *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture: City, Technology and Society in the Information Age* (Barcelona: Actar, 2008), 132.

[61] Sandy Isenstadt, "Contested Contexts," in *Site Matters*, ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn (New York: Routledge, 2005), 178.

[62] The book consists of interviews with Steven Holl, Roisin Heneghan, Bjarne Mastenbroek, Bjarke Ingels, Joshua Prince-Ramus, Patrick Schumacher, Kjetil Thorsen & Craig Dykers, and Harry Gugger. Karen Forbes, *Site Specific* (San Francisco: ORO Editions, 2015).

the sole focus on practice prevent any expansion of the debate on the issue.

Reclaiming Context: Methodology and the Structure of the Thesis

Although the notion of context has lost its centrality in contemporary critical architectural discourse, it still emerges in many architectural thoughts and discussions today in design studios, publications, etc. Within this schizophrenic situation in which there is both an absence and presence of the notion, this study aims to create a historical and theoretical basis, aiming to launch a contemporary discussion of context. In many of the discussions reviewed so far, the meaning attributed to context is either static and fixed or remote from critical disciplinary conceptions, which obstructs any generative debate on context by defining it conventionally or replacing it subsequently. It should be noted that the intention is not merely to abandon the words or replace them with others, since the meanings of words are like palimpsests, being overlapped, juxtaposed and recycled. Adrian Forty, in his book *Words and Buildings*, speaks about "the constant flux between words and meanings, of meanings' pursuit of words, and words' escape from meanings", and argues that:

> Our problem, then, is to recover the past meanings of words so that we can interpret what those who uttered them intended to say. But this is no simple matter, for the history of language is not one of the straightforward replacement of one meaning by another, like a car manufacturer's model changes, but rather a process of accumulation as new meanings and inflections are added to existing words without necessarily displacing the old ones. To find the meaning of a word at any one time is to know the available possibilities: meanings cannot be identified the way one looks up a word up in a dictionary.[63]

This research aims to reclaim context by recovering its past meanings, as suggested by Forty. In fact, Forty himself offered a definition of context in his dictionary by briefly discussing it in reference to Ernesto N. Rogers, Aldo Rossi and Colin Rowe, the figures whose understandings of context will be further analysed in this thesis with an in-depth inquiry of their works in a historical account.[64] Since the meanings of words accumulate over time, past meanings can only be grasped by unfolding every layer and contextualizing them. In this regard, this thesis avoids any essentialist interpretations of the notion of context that dwell upon the dictionary definition or the origins of the word, in that the aim is rather to uncover the various attributed dimensions of context through a careful examination of their specific histories. In other words, the research traces the preceding critical definitions of the notion as part of a thorough critical understanding of context today. The intention here is not to offer a complete mapping of the definitions of the notion context, since such a task would be inconceivable. Instead, focus will be on the period between 1950 and 1980, as a period in

[63] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 14-15.

[64] Forty, *Words and Buildings,* 132-135.

which paradigm changes occurred that still affect our contemporary conception of the term.

Various perspectives on context were introduced in the early 1950s to heal the ill effects of orthodox modern architecture and to attack the destructive post-war reconstructions taking place in the United States and Europe. Post-war period witnessed a growing loss of trust in the ideals of modernist architecture, especially in its tabula rasa approach to urbanism, object fixation and break with tradition. This triggered criticism and new approaches in architecture, which also substantiated new pedagogical experiments at the schools of architecture mainly in USA and west Europe. During this period, universities in USA faced with an immense increase in student numbers due to the veterans return to education for free as guaranteed by the legislations.[65] In addition to the students, number of architecture schools also increased in USA after the 1950s, which enable new platforms to challenge both the established Beaux-Arts doctrines as well as Bauhaus education as carried and conducted by European emigres. Humanities, social sciences, visual studies, environmental and urban issues received a more prominent role within the new architecture curriculums. It was also the years of urban renewal in USA as mainly activated with the Housing Act of 1949 and the incipience of urban sprawl or suburbanization. In post-war European cities, urban expansion or massive urbanization was of significance, which for instance was motivated in Italy by the change in the country's economic model from agricultural to industrial during the years of the *miracolo economico* that lead to the migration of large flux of people from rural south to the industrial cities in the north. Studied architecture and initiated their academic or professional practice during the 1950s and early 1960s, Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and Colin Rowe responded to this specific time-context in their early works.

In my view, these protagonists offered various perspectives on context, although at many times contradicting each other. They nurtured a vivid and rich definitions on context in architecture in reference to the broader political, social, physical and academic context in which they are part of. In the end, these simultaneously developed multiple approaches and different positions formed a debate where the context understanding gained a central role within architectural discourse. This debate was rather implicit since these protagonists almost never come together to shape a discourse or to discuss their arguments directly although they were fully aware of each other's positions and even participated in the same organizations such as *Roma Interrotta* exhibition. This study does not dissect the relations between these protagonists or search for the moments of exchange among them. In this regard, the aim is not to reconstruct this implicit debate to make it explicit but rather to show how these protagonists offered parallel yet distinct critical understandings of context in the 1950s and 1960s. While new layers of meanings were attributed to the notion context in the 1970s, the previous ones were erased or covered. Context began to lose its critical dimension

[65] For a more detailed information on the education in USA schools of architecture between 1940-1968, see: Joan Ockman, "Modernism Takes Command," in *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, ed. Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 120-159.

by being absorbed by the dominant postmodern paradigms of the time of historicism and eclecticism. The First Venice Architecture Biennale, which took place in 1980, witnessed one of the most institutionally acknowledged and internationally disseminations of postmodern architecture, and struck the killing blow to the context debate that finally killed the critical understanding of context in architecture.

Since the criticism of postmodern architecture from the "outside" after the 1980s has failed to generate a critical debate on context, this research adopts a so-called postmodern methodology in developing a *critique from within* by returning to the protagonists of the debate. To this end, this study makes an in-depth inquiry into the works of such well-known theoreticians, architects and instructors of postmodern architecture as Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and Colin Rowe, with the aim being to reconstruct the context debate, as something that has raised little scholarly interest to date. As opposed to Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen* ("Art History without Names"), this study dwells on names not to offer monographies through a biographical research but to contextualize the discussion through these agents. In other words, these figures form part of a broader history and provide specific perspectives from which various dimensions of context can be deciphered and depicted. Analysing the ideas of these key figures is significant, since their later works led to a blinkered understanding of context that still effects the current underpinnings of the term, while their early works reveal the subtle role of context for a critical disciplinary framework. In this regard, to display the genealogy of the post-war and postmodern architectural discussion on context, the practices, pedagogies and theories of these protagonists are unfolded from the 1980s back to the 1950s, with a particular reading tracing its past meanings. This will provide new insights and interpretations into the work of these protagonists by offering an alternative historiography through the lens of the context debate. Following a reverse chronology that starts with the First Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980, where the murder was committed by reducing the discussion of context to one of a problem of mere language based on the formal repertoire of the discipline of architecture, this study reveals the various added, attributed and altered dimensions of context, and discusses and interprets these dimensions in relation to their broader social, political, economic, and disciplinary context. Accordingly, the aim is to contextualize the context-debate by historicizing its theory and theorizing its history.

The thesis comprises six chapters in total, and is accompanied by a foreword that explains the relevance of the discussion according to my own personal context. This general introduction attempts to situate the discussion in contemporary architectural discourse and to reveal the background of the critique of the notion of context. The following chapter on the First Venice Architectural Biennale will reveal how the understanding of context was narrowed with emphasis on postmodern historicism and eclecticism. The discursive framework of the Biennale is evaluated by elaborating the position of the critics working in its organization and

the participant architects, and the counter-positions of the critiques. Highlighting this specific event that took place in 1980, the Biennale chapter works as a hinge that combines the introduction, which makes a brief mapping of the understanding of context from 1980 until today, and the following main three chapters, which unfolds the layers of the discussion from 1980 back to the 1950s.

The three main chapters offer an in-depth reading and understanding of the definition of context in the works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and Colin Rowe. These names are specifically important in tracing the evolution of the context debate, since they were the protagonists of the debate who were later registered in the postmodern camp, as the First Venice Architecture Biennale confirms. These figures also allow focus on different conceptions of context through their projects, writings, teaching materials, etc. The change in the understanding of context "from place to memory" is discussed in reference to Rossi, "from spatial to iconographic" in reference to Venturi and Scott Brown, and "from layers to object" in reference to Rowe. These three chapters have a parallel historical organization, which enables cross readings across the different lines of thought, and each chapter begins with a discussion of their direct or implicit influence on the First Venice Architecture Biennale (1980). This is followed by a discussion on the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition (1978), in which all took part, after which their seminal writings or projects – Rossi' Analogous City plate, Venturi and Scott Brown's *Learning from Las Vegas*, and Rowe's *Collage City* – all of which had a substantial influence in framing postmodern architecture, are elaborated.

After elaborating these seminal works, reflecting on the postmodern condition of the 1970s, an *intermezzo* section is introduced that aims to highlight and define the reasons why shifts occurred in the framing of the context debate, such as the 1968 student movements in Italy, the emerging pop architecture in 1960s American culture, and the influence of the philosophical writings of Karl Popper on utopia and tradition. Afterwards, Rossi's *The Architecture of the City*, Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, and Rowe's Cornell studio teachings will be presented to uncover the initial critical underpinnings of context in their works. Each chapter ends with an assessment of materials from 1950s to trace the birth of the context-thinking in Rossi's collaboration with Ernesto Rogers in the journal *Casabella Continuità,* Venturi's master thesis at Princeton on context, and Rowe's writings on transparency with Robert Slutzky. Finally, the Conclusion will wrap up the discussion by reflecting on how reclaiming context today can expand the horizon – at least in the field of architecture – to address the problems of built environments that resulted from either the ignoring or abuse of context.

The research returned first to the widely disseminated primary materials and made a deep reinvestigation of them to probe the protagonists' statements on context. In addition to the existing available sources, the research also incorporated new original materials derived from

archival studies. Documents from the l'Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee (ASAC) in Venice were used to construct the background discussion of the First Venice Architecture Biennale and to elaborate on the different perspectives within the event, and the archives of the Cornell University, where Colin Rowe taught for almost two decades, were visited. Although the archive does not hold much material about Rowe, one internal departmental report shows uniquely Rowe's pedagogical approach in his first years at Cornell. The Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia holds Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's personal archives, and I was permitted to access these documents, with those from Venturi's student years from the 1940s and 1950s and his teachings from the 1960s being of particular interest. These documents from the early period, which have been subjected to little study by researchers to date, provided substantial insight into Venturi's early understanding of context. During this archival study, I interviewed Denise Scott Brown at her home and visited Vanna Venturi House, and so studying context from its original context enabled me to make a well-grounded and also original interpretation of the topic.

Hence, this research required a study of vast amounts of materials from different sources and in different media. The narrative of the debate was constructed through the primary sources such as exhibitions, teaching materials, student projects, seminal books, drawings and buildings, which were also carefully examined through the secondary sources written on them such as PhD dissertations, research articles, and reviews. There has already been done some in-depth research on the main cases of this thesis such as the PhD dissertations of Léa-Catherine Szacka on exhibiting the postmodern architecture in the First Venice Architecture Biennale, Deborah Fausch on the architecture and urbanism of Venturi and Scott Brown, Martino Stierli on Venturi and Scott Brown's Las Vegas studio and articles of Joan Ockman on the life and works of Colin Rowe, Mary Louise Lobsinger on Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città,* Maarten Delbeke on *Roma Interrotta* competition and so on.[66] In this regard, this thesis is situated within a broader scholarship and contributes to its growth by bringing new knowledge and interpretations both on the formation of the context debate between 1950 and 1980 and on the outstanding actors and events of this particular period while positions itself in dialogue with the existing literature and research that touch upon them. Despite neopragmatists argument that architecture is a practice, this study brings together and constructs a dialogue with a rich body of materials to contribute to perform architecture as discourse, which cannot be restricted to the design of buildings but covers a more expanded field of different expressions of ideas, concepts and positions.

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[66] Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale" (PhD diss., University College London, Bartlett School of Architecture, 2012); Deborah Fausch, "The Context of Meaning is Everyday Life: Venturi and Scott Brown's Theories of Architecture and Urbanism" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999); Martino Stierli, *Las Vegas in the Rearview Mirror: the City in Theory, Photography, and Film* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013); Joan Ockman, "Form without Utopia: Contextualizing Colin Rowe," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57 (1998): 448-456; Mary Louise Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy: On Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città,*" *Journal of Architectural Education* 59/3 (2006): 28-38; Maarten Delbeke, "Roma Interrotta: Baroque Rome as a (Post)Modernist Model," *OASE* 86 (2011): 74-85. For a more expanded literature see the Bibliography.

This research offers a critical archaeology of the discussion on context in post-war and postmodern architecture, although there is no well-defined, explicit or coherent body of theory on context. Understanding architecture as a discourse, I introduce the diverse, layered and implicit approaches to context that took place between 1950 and 1980 as a debate, or as a dialogue among the key figures. Although contextualism has been associated with uniformity and conventionality since the 1980s, the reflections on context in the 1950s and 1960s are of key importance when criticality is defined, allowing the development of an argument against the ill-effects of the governing paradigm (international orthodox modernism by then) and by reacting and engaging with the realities of the built environments with multiplied perspectives by *weaving together* theory, pedagogy and practice. Accordingly, reclaiming context through an in-depth inquiry into the context debate can alter the fixed definition of “critical architecture” attributed to the 1980s and 1990s autonomy project, may heal the neopragmatists’ recent disempowerment of theory and criticality, and can offer a critical reflection on current building practices. In addition, the context debate as a case in itself can best represent how theory can operate as criticism, architecture as discourse and architectural discourse as prosthesis.

2. The Dissolution of "Context" in the First Venice Architecture Biennale

Situating the First Venice Architecture Biennale

> Following the painters and the film-makers, the architects have now been admitted to the Venice Biennale as well. The response to this, the first architecture Biennale, was one of disappointment. The participants who exhibited in Venice formed an avant-garde with the fronts reversed. Under the slogan of 'the presence of the past' they sacrificed the tradition of modernity in the name of a new species of historicism…[67]

It was with these words that Jürgen Habermas opened his speech when accepting the Theodor W. Adorno Prize on 11 September, 1980 in Frankfurt.[68] Habermas went on to criticise neoconservatives for placing the burdens of failures of the capitalist modernization of the economy onto cultural modernity.[69] Hence, the false sublation of culture led to the abandoning of modernity and its project entirely, while the mechanisms of its failure, which, according to Habermas, lay in the pressures on the communicative infrastructures, remained unaddressed. This false sublation of cultural modernity was shaped in the late 1970s and early 1980s as part of the emerging neoconservative and neoliberal thought, with the former prescribing a return to an idyllic past, and the latter highlighting the populist expression of multiculturalism and plurality. This postmodern condition emphasizing past and plurality were also reflected in the artistic domain, as indicated by the works exhibited in the First Venice Architecture Biennale. In this regard, it is not surprising that in criticizing postmodernity in his talk, Habermas referred to the Biennale, which opened to public on 27 July, 1980, only few weeks before the award ceremony.

Exhibitions, and in particular biennales, have the capacity to articulate movements, stir central discussions and mark traces in the field, despite their transient nature. The First Venice Architecture Biennale was one of the most outstanding events in representing the dominant paradigm in the architectural discourse at the time. Bringing together American and European architects under the same roof, the Biennale had an international effect in representing the limits and dimensions of postmodern architecture, and was highly polemical, publicised and debated. It is not the intention in this research to historicise the event or judge its success, as this has already been done by Léa-Catherine Szacka in her PhD thesis entitled "Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale", completed at the Bartlett School of Architecture in 2012. In her research, Szacka investigated the First Venice Architecture Biennale as part of a study of architectural exhibitions, focusing on the history of the event and the means and techniques of representation that were

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[67] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 38.

[68] The title of the talk was *Die Moderne: Ein unvollendetes Projekt* (Modernity: An Unfinished Project), which later translated into English and given as a James lecture at the Institute of Humanities, New York on March 5, 1981, then published both in German and English in 1981, and eventually became one of the most seminal work of Habermas since.

[69] Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," 43.

employed. In addition to her archival research, oral history played a significant role in the thesis, since she reconstructed the event by uncovering its hidden stories through interviews held with participating architects and the organizing team.

While Szacka propounded the Biennale and its *Strada Novissima* exhibition as a prosperous event that advanced both the exhibition culture and postmodern architecture, the research presented here suggests that it actually struck the deathblow of the context debate. To put it differently, it not only sacrificed the tradition of modernity, but also sabotaged any attempts to develop multiple perspectives on the significance of context in architectural discourse after World War II. As one of the most outstanding highlights of postmodern architecture, the First Venice Architecture Biennale put itself forward as an apodictic effort to study the withdrawal of the critical understanding of context from the dominant architectural paradigm of the 1980s. Hence, this chapter makes an analysis of the Biennale to point out how the exhibited historicist and eclectic works and its reductive discourse on the linguistic aspects of architecture served to narrow the multi-layered, implicit and critical context debate. Through a renewed interpretation of the archival documents, the materials and texts presented in the catalogue of the Biennale, and the works exhibited especially at the *Strada Novissima* exhibition, this research offers a unique reading of the event by situating it in a broader perspective –as a hinge, a midpoint in the historiography of architectural discourse from the 1950s up until the present day at which the moment of paradigm change in regard to the context debate can be captured.

Towards the First Venice Architecture Biennale

La Biennale di Venezia was established in 1895 when the *L'Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia* (1st International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice) was organised. From the very outset, the Venice Biennale drew great attention, attracting some 224,000 visitors.[70] The event reached a multidisciplinary perspective with the addition of music, cinema and theatre to the program in 1930, 1932 and 1934 respectively. The organization of the event fell into the hands of the State rather than the city council after Italian Prime Minister Mussolini signed a law with the king in 1930. Following this agreement, the fascist leader Mussolini used the international artistic platform to engage in national propaganda until he was deposed in 1943 (Mussolini and Hitler visited the Biennale together in 1934). Decades later, the first international architectural exhibition was held in 1975 under the directorship of Vittorio Gregotti, who organised several other exhibitions in 1976 and 1978.[71] In 1980, the

[70] "From the Beginnings Until the Second World War," in the website of the La Biennale di Venezia. Last accessed, 24 February, 2016. http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/history/vb1.html?back=true

[71] During the four-year presidency of Carlo Ripa di Meana (1975–1978), Vittorio Gregotti became the new director of the Biennale's Visual Arts Section in 1975. Gregotti organised the first international architectural exhibition of the

first International Venice Architecture Biennial became an independent event under the presidency of Giuseppe Galasso (1979–1982) who appointed Italian architect, theorist and historian Paolo Portoghesi as the first director. Initially as director and later as president, Portoghesi was one of the most influential figures shaping the first 10 years of the Biennale's Architecture section,[72] and brought together a core team for the advisory commission for the architectural section that consisted of Constantino Dardi, Rosario Giuffré, Udo Kultermann, Giuseppe Mazzariol and Robert Stern.[73] Preparations of the Biennale began as early as March 1979 and the draft program was shaped during the first three months, after which the topic "After Modern Architecture" was developed as the main theme.[74] However, the content of the exhibition was not yet clear during the summer of 1979 when the possible options were listed as: designing a new US pavilion, redesigning Frank Lloyd Wright's housing project in Venice, designing a water bus station on the Grand Canal or a small intervention proposed by the Comune di Venezia.[75] Following the summer, the first architectural section commission meeting was held on 14–15 September, 1979 with the participation of the director and the advisory commission for the architectural section. In this meeting, the title of the "After Modern Architecture" exhibition was suggested as "The Future of the Past" aiming "to show a way out from the modern movement (by a way of a link with the past)".[76]

This first commission meeting witnessed the first deviations from the initial ideas about the theme of the Biennale and how to exhibit it. The previously proposed options of a US pavilion, the redesign of one of Wright's projects, or the design of a public transport terminal were "considered too dangerous and difficult, and therefore discarded".[77] In fact, Wright's housing designs are well known for being highly integrated with the topography and the nature of their particular sites, which provides them with a distinctive character when compared to his modernist counterparts, while designing a water bus station on the Grand Canal was also addressing a very specific design problem within the context of the city of Venice. The focus was narrowed and shifted in the first commission meeting, where modern architecture was introduced as a more problematic category that needed to be overcome through the notion of

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biennale in 1975 entitled: "A proposito del Mulino Stucky". This exhibition was followed by other architectural exhibitions titled "Werkbund 1907. Alle origini del design", "Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il fascismo" and "Europa-America, centro storico, suburbia" in 1976 and "Utopia e crisi dell'antinatura. Intenzioni architettoniche in Italia" in 1978.

[72] Portoghesi also directed the second International Venice Architecture Biennale in 1982 on "Architecture in Islamic Countries". He was appointed president of the organization in 1983 and held the position until 1992. During his presidency, he appointed Aldo Rossi twice as the director of the third and fourth International Architecture Exhibitions that took place in 1985 and 1986, and Francesco Dal Co as the director of the fifth, held in 1991.

[73] In addition, Francesco Cellini, Claudio D'Amato, Antonio De Bonis, Paolo Farina and Emilio Battisti helped carry out researches and in the organization of the exhibitions. Eugenia Fiorin and Paolo Cimarosti were assisting in the architectural section as well.

[74] "Relazione Mensile Sulla Attivita' Del Settore Architettura, Giugno 1979," Box 4093, Archivio Storico delle Arte Contemporanee (ASAC).

[75] "Relazione Mensile Sulla Attivita' Del Settore Architettura, Luglio/Agosto 1979," Box 4093, ASAC.

[76] "First Meeting," Box 658, ASAC.

[77] "First Meeting."

past. Hence, the idea of context, the traces of which at least could be found in an exhibition of site-specific architectural examples and particular interventions within the city, was replaced with the obscure framework of “past”.

In the first commission meeting, it was decided to have two autonomous structures for the organization of the European and American sides of the exhibition, and Robert Stern took the lead for the latter. During the meeting, Stern proposed to invite American architects Gehry, Graves, Greenberg, Moore, Stern, Tigerman and Venturi & Rauch, and the committee decided to organise the exhibitions with Kenneth Frampton, Vincent Scully, Charles Jencks, and Christian Norberg-Schulz, who would go on to attend the second commission meeting, held on 23–24 November, 1979. The nature of the exhibitions was not discussed at all in this second commission meeting, as focus was on the names to be invited for the “After Modern Architecture” exhibition and the young architect’s session. The list of American architects remained the same, while the European architects were listed as Bofill, Rossi, Dardi, Hollein, Krier, Portzamparc, Stirling, Isozaki, Porro, Koolhaas, Kleihues, GRAU, Purini and Gordon Smith.

In this second meeting, discussions were mainly about the definition of the role of the critics in the exhibition. As stated in the meeting report, the aim was to create an “intellectual debate” that would be accessible to the layman by constructing a dialogue between the autobiographical display of the architects and the more general interpretation of postmodern architecture made by the critics.[78] In this regard, the critics were given as much weight as the star architects of the show. The report reveals the different agendas of the critics, providing an implicit understanding of the later apparently irreconcilable positions of Portoghesi, Jencks and Frampton. The discussion began with new proposals for the theme of the exhibition. “The Future of the Past” had been suggested in the previous meeting, along with “Communication of Architecture”, most likely by Jencks, as a more specific topic in order to eliminate the danger of seeing the past in terms of tradition at all costs.[79] Postmodern architecture was stressed various times in the meeting, but Frampton was obviously not comfortable with it becoming the governing theme, which might have been the reason for the following explanation in the report: “shows should not take on the appearance of the postmodern propaganda”, but should represent “different positions of architecture after the modern movement”.[80]

In the end, Portoghesi took the lead, concluding the discussion at the meeting by offering "The Presence of the Past, after the Architecture of the Modern Movement" as the main

[78] “II Riunione Commissione Architettura,” Box 630, ASAC.

[79] “II Riunione Commissione Architettura.”

[80] “II Riunione Commissione Architettura.”

thematic, and “The Determinacy of Language” as the point of emphasis.[81] Accordingly, the fierce debate in the second commission meeting was concluded by exalting the use of past vocabulary against the multiple approaches that developed after modern architecture, which were critical of Orthodox Modernism while still aiming to ameliorate it within the tradition of modernity. The understanding of context was a key concern in many of these initial positions that were developed after modern architecture, which will be discussed in depth in the following chapters. Despite Frampton’s objections in the second commission meeting, the category of postmodern architecture – defined more specifically as the use of the past in its formal language – filtered all the diverse perspectives developed since the early 1950s. As a result of the above, the First Venice Architecture Biennale not only offered a narrowed perspective by defining architecture as a language and the presence of the past as the ultimate path to be taken by practitioners for the exigencies of the discipline, but also led to a misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the preceding diverse attempts. Whatever happened after modern architecture was now melted into the pot of postmodern historicism and eclecticism.

The dispute between the critics and the advisory team during the second commission meeting was revealed when Frampton sent a telegram to Portoghesi on April 28, 1980 stating, “Regret unable to continue as critic to Biennale. Letter following.”[82] In his letter dating April 25, 1980, Frampton explained the reasons for his resignation to Portoghesi in respect to two issues. First, Frampton refused to participate in the exhibition planned for the critics, stating “firstly, that it confused the category of the ‘star’ architect with the role of being a critic and secondly, that no matter what stance the critic took he or she would in fact become absorbed by the acritical nature of the work surrounding him or her in every side”.[83] He was afraid of verifying postmodernism or being labelled a postmodernist, despite the critical stance and distance he would take. Second, Frampton was completely unhappy with the minor role given to the critics in selecting the participating architects, saying: “as the months have gone on I have become increasingly convinced that the manner of selection has been coloured by personal patronage and in no instance have outside, moderate critics been permitted to play any kind of effective mediating role. This has been particularly true in the case of the American selections …”.[84] Frampton mentioned no names, but he was obviously disturbed by Stern’s dominance in organizing the American side of the show, since the names he offered at the first commission meeting remained unchanged until the end.

After his resignation from his position at the Biennale, Frampton developed a new alternative path with the potential to challenge postmodern architecture. This consequential relationship was made much clearer in a recent talk by Frampton in which he explained that he felt the

[81] “II Riunione Commissione Architettura.”

[82] “Frampton’s telegram,” Box 621, ASAC.

[83] “Frampton’s letter to Portoghesi,” Box 621, ASAC.

[84] “Frampton’s letter to Portoghesi.”

necessity to reposition the modern movement after seeing the postmodern style game being played at the First Venice Architecture Biennale, where he emphasized the role of Robert Stern, who was extremely popular at Columbia at that time, as the leading American commissioner.[85] For this reason, he later developed the notion of Critical Regionalism, coined first by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, in search of a critical culture that "does not reject the thrust of modernization, nonetheless resists being totally absorbed and consumed by it".[86] His critical regionalism emphasised the tectonics or poetics of construction, in contrast to the glorification of scenography and representation in postmodern architecture.[87] Although Frampton's efforts were crucial in showing another way out than postmodern architecture, his voice was not truly heard by practitioners, who were enjoying eclectic and historicist approaches representing, either consciously or unconsciously, the governing neoliberal and neoconservative policies. Context was an intrinsic aspect of Frampton's emerging theory, claiming a critical local-universal nexus; however, his theory alone was unable to generate a productive debate on context.[88]

"The Presence of the Past": Four Critics Taking Position

After all the disputes, the First Venice Architecture Biennale was opened to the public on July 27, 1980 under the title "The Presence of the Past" in the Corderia (rope factory) of Arsenale, which was being opened to the public for the first time. In addition to the entrance gate and the Teatro del Mondo designed by Aldo Rossi, the Biennale hosted seven different exhibitions: three exhibitions paying homage to Gardella, Ridolfi and Johnson (curated by Paolo Farina, Claudio D'Amato, Massimo Vignelli respectively); La tana riaperta (a historical display on Corderie dell'Arsenale, curated by Manlio Brusatin); the main exhibition *Strada Novissima,* in which the façades of 20 major architects were displayed; an exhibition devoted to 55 young architects (curated by Paolo Portoghesi, Constantino Dardi, Rosario Giuffré, Giuseppe Mazzariol, Udo Kultermann, Robert Stern, Charles Jencks, Christian Norberg-Schulz and Vincent Scully); the critics' exhibition of Scully, Norberg-Schulz and Jencks; a retrospective

[85] Kenneth Frampton, "Patient (Re)search: Frampton in Conversation with Max Risselada," Berlage Lecture Series on 18 September, 2014, TU Delft, the Netherlands.

[86] Kenneth Frampton, "Some Reflections on Postmodernism and Architecture," in *Postmodernism: ICA Documents*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi (London: Free Association Book, 1989), 78.

[87] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 16-30.

[88] In June 1990, student organization Stylos organized an International Seminar on Critical Regionalism at Delft University of Technology with the encouragement of Alexander Tzonis, who was a professor in Delft at the time. The event cultivated a very vivid discussion environment with the participation of well-known philosophers, theorists, critics, etc. such as Fredric Jameson, Marshall Berman, Kenneth Frampton and Alan Colquhoun. Although students banish the title Critical Regionalism by naming the event as "Context and Modernity" and even Tzonis himself proposed Critical Realism as a better concept by deleting few letters from the word Regionalism in his talk, the discussions mainly revolved around the premises and problems of Critical Regionalism. See: Gerard Bergers, ed., *Context and Modernity. A Post-Seminar Reading* (Delft: Stylos, 1991).

tribute to Ernesto Basile (curated by Paolo Portoghesi, Antonio de Bonis, Salvolo Nardo, and Valeria Grilli); and two displays entitled Natura-Storia and “The Banal Object” (the latter curated by Alessandro Mendini, and arranged by the Alchymia Studio). **(Figure 2.1)**

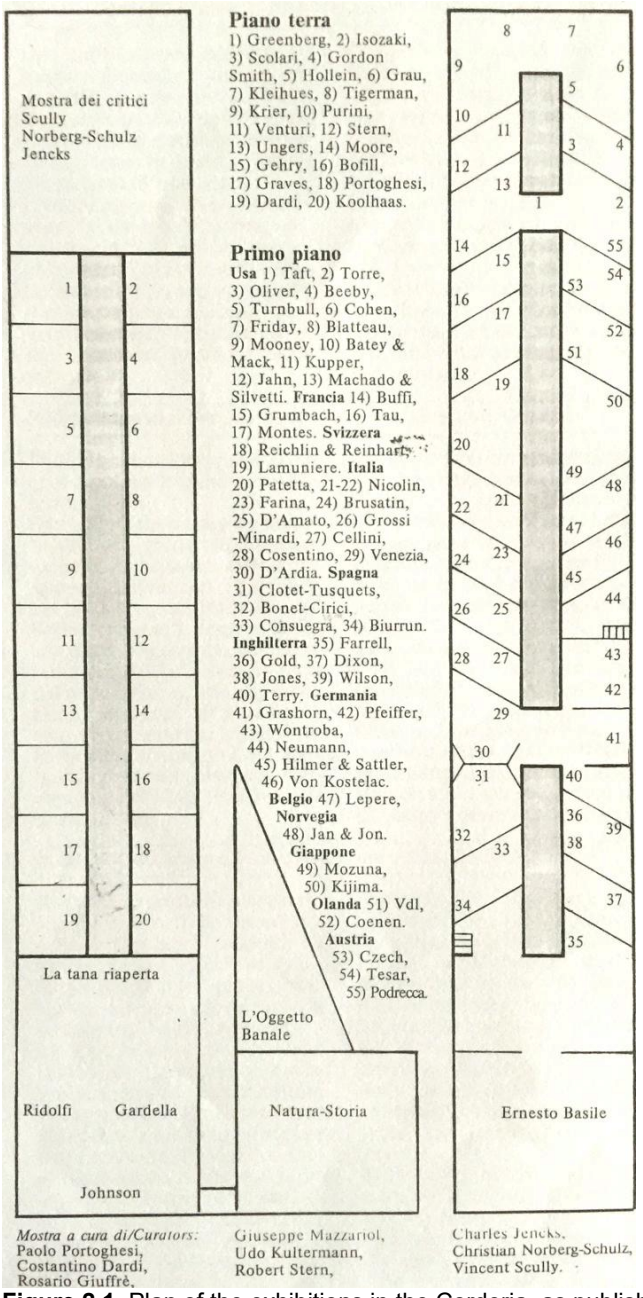

Figure 2.1. Plan of the exhibitions in the Corderia, as published in the Biennale’s flyer.

The critical and discursive framework of the Biennale was presented most clearly in its catalogue, which was published in 1980 by Italian publisher Electa Editrice with the title “The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture.” **(Figure 2.2)** The catalogue included a short introduction by organization president Giuseppe Galasso, articles written by the director Portoghesi and critics Scully, Norberg-Schulz and Jencks, and

information on the exhibitions and the participating architects. Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico illustrated the cover, with its longitudinal section drawn by Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi. It is no surprise that Palladio was chosen for the cover, given the many events in 1980 celebrating the fourth centenary anniversary of his death. **(Figure 2.3)** Moreover, Palladio's presence in the current architectural discourse as well as the theatre's set design of an illusionary street scenery provided a perfect reference to the theme of the Biennale and its famous *Strada Novissima* exhibition, which will be introduced in depth in the following pages. That said, it is first necessary to discuss the discursive framework of the Biennale, which was shaped by Portoghesi, Scully, Norberg-Schulz and Jencks after the resignation of Frampton, presented most directly through their writings published in the catalogue. The different positions taken by the members of this think-tank were laid bare in their catalogue essays, in which their different understandings of context can also be traced.

Figure 2.2. Cover of the English catalogue of the First Venice Architecture Biennale (1980).

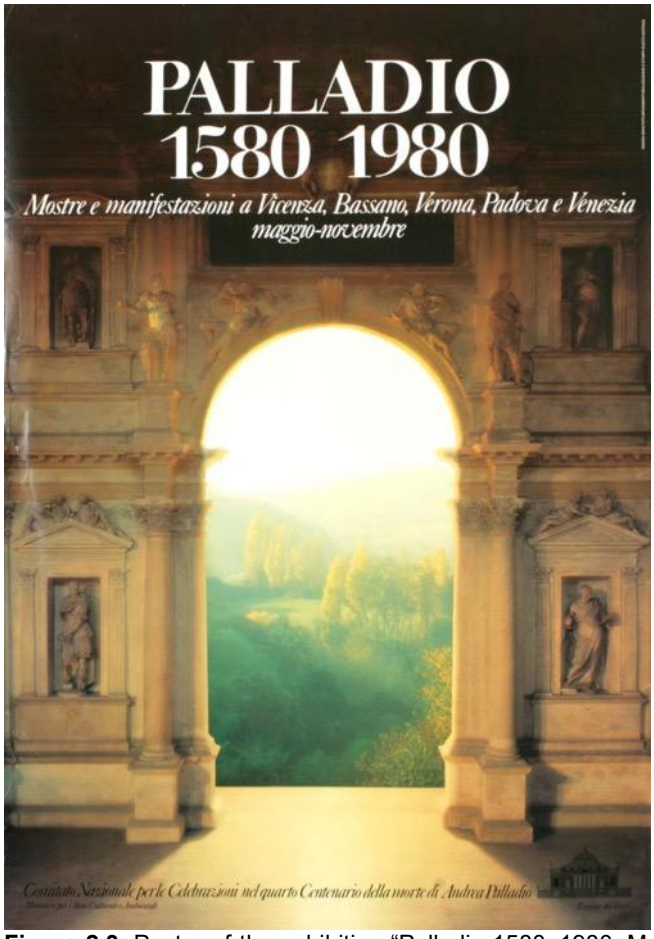

Figure 2.3. Poster of the exhibition "Palladio 1580–1980: Mostre e manifestazioni a Vicenza, Bassano, Verona, Padova e Venezia, Maggio-Novembre" organised by the Comitato nazionale per le celebrazioni nel quarto centenario della morte di Andrea Palladio in 1980. Source: https://new.liveauctioneers.com/item/43267325

Portoghesi, in his text entitled "The End of Prohibitionism," emphasised the emerging post-modern approaches in architecture, which were characterised by a return to history as the main motivation behind the theme of the Biennale, by stating:

> The return of architecture to the womb of history and its recycling in new syntactic contexts of the traditional forms is one of the symptoms that has produced a profound "difference" in a series of works and projects in the past few years understood by some critics in the ambiguous but efficacious category of Post-Modern.[89]

However, the title of the Biennale was not chosen as "Post-modern", and as explained by Portoghesi, the intention was to focus more precisely on "the specific disciplining of linguistic exigencies".[90] In this regard, the Biennale did not concern the postmodern condition in general, but rather focused on the formal expressions re-appropriating the past, the so-called forbidden fruit of Modern Architecture. For Portoghesi, architecture was equivalent to a language, where traditional and historical forms construct the vocabulary. Hence, Portoghesi

[89] Paolo Portoghesi, "The End of Prohibitionism," in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 9.

[90] Portoghesi, "The End of Prohibitionism," 9.

defined the problem of modern architecture as a linguistic one, purifying architectural language. In this line of thought, orthodox modern architecture is considered to be acontextual for being ahistorical, since context is defined here implicitly as the formal vocabularies of the discipline of architecture. In other words, Portoghesi proposed “syntactic context” as the core of the discussion.

Defining architecture as a language brought the issue of communication to light. According to Portoghesi, using historical and traditional forms “presents sign systems of great conventional value” that are “utilizable for the socialization of aesthetic experience”.[91] To put it differently, people can become active agents in architecture, as using past forms could represent and cultivate their memories and imaginations through association. Portoghesi considered the users as the core subject of architectural practice, suggesting that it was time to return the role of the subject, which had been claimed by architects – “the technicians of form” – in the modern movement, to the community of its users.[92] Thus architecture should be accessible to the public rather than just an elite group of architects, which shows implicitly the questioning of the possibility of an *avant-garde*. Portoghesi believed that using past forms would end the prohibitionism of modern architecture by communicating with the community of its users and recycling the formal vocabulary of the discipline. Here, tradition and collective memory are believed to be embodied in and carried by forms, and in this regard, Portoghesi’s emphasis was on the cultural context, which could be responded to by adopting pre-existing forms.

Vincent Scully opened his text “How Things Get To Be The Way They Are Now” with a criticism of the Modern Movement: “Its urbanism was (therefore) destructive of the traditional city, while its individual buildings were normally hostile to those which preceded them and with which in consequence they got along very badly.”[93] Here, he attacks implicitly the Modern Movement’s disregard of context, the surrounding built environment and the character of the urban texture. According to Scully, American architects such as Louis Kahn, Charles Moore and Robert Venturi had liberated the field since the 1950s by breaking up the universal set of forms of the International Style. He introduced Kahn as one of the first reconcilers of idealist Modern Architecture with the more traditional understandings of architecture concerning mass, materiality and functional specificity. Although he avoided understanding of buildings as signs, and hence abandoned the use of any eclectic quotation, his architecture spurred many colleagues to search other formal gestures, such as those that are symbolic, popular and associational. Scully introduced the “shingle style” as the common denominator in these different American approaches.

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[91] Portoghesi, “The End of Prohibitionism,” 11.

[92] Portoghesi, “The End of Prohibitionism,” 12.

[93] Vincent Scully, “How Things Get To Be The Way They Are Now,” in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 15.

Scully's argument had been voiced previously in the book *The Shingle Style Today or The Historian's Revenge,* published in 1974, which he dedicated to Louis I. Kahn. Here, Scully argued that works of many American architects since the 1960s had been influenced by the Shingle Style of the 1880s, citing Venturi's Vanna Venturi House, Moore's Klotz House, and Stern and Hagmann's Wiseman House as examples.[94] **(Figure 2.4)** Through this comparative analysis, Scully contextualised the emerging architectural approaches through the formal patterns of the American vernacular tradition. By offering the shingle style as a framework for the interpretation of contemporary American architecture, Scully sought a continuity and cultural specificity that was not (solely) bound to the postmodern condition in general. Against historical revivalism and the decontextualised use of historical forms, he supported readapting the formal features of vernacular architecture to trigger associations through their symbolism. Hence, his understanding of context was related to tradition, and the use of vernacular forms was considered to be the ultimate way of responding to the local cultural context.

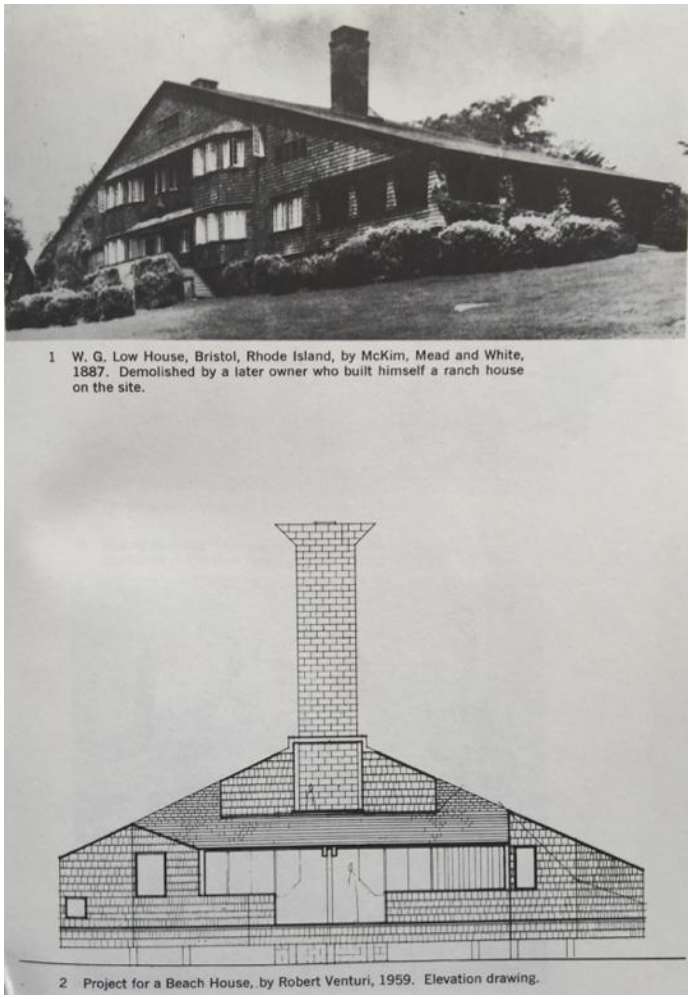

Figure 2.4. McKim, Mead and White's W.G. Low House (1887) at the top and Robert Venturi's Project for a Beach House (1959) at the bottom. Source: Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style Today or The Historian's Revenge*, 43.

[94] Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style Today or The Historian's Revenge* (New York: George Braziller, 1974).

Among the critics of the Biennale, Christian Norberg-Schulz was the most critical of postmodern architecture. In his text entitled “Towards an Authentic Architecture” he argued that the failure of Modern Architecture was the loss of a sense of belonging and participation. According to him, *demand for meaning* is the underlying phenomenon explaining the emerging architectural approaches. Norberg-Schulz compared Venturi’s complexity and Rossi’s rationalistic typology as two symptomatic cases approaching the same problem in a diametrically opposite way,[95] but for him, both approaches – and hence postmodernism – failed to meet the demand for meaning, since Venturi’s decorated shed devalued spatial relationships by expressing meaning through decoration, while Rossi’s idealization of type left out man, his everyday life and the local circumstances of the place. This led Norberg-Schulz to return to the discussion of modern architecture as a means of better analysing the problem. He criticised the equating of modern architecture solely with functionalism, arguing that it was developed with the intention of healing the split between thought and feeling that occurred during the 19th century. He stated, however, that “its results were less convincing than the aims and means”.[96]

Norberg-Schulz also considered the recent emphasis on “architectural semiology” to be inadequate in responding to the *demand for meaning*. He believed that understanding architecture as a language and meaning as an aspect of communication reduced the problem to a matter of mere sign system. For Norberg-Schulz, *demand for meaning* in architecture was not a linguistic or stylistic problem, but was rather about revealing the spatiality of the “life-world” that could be studied through environmental phenomenology. He introduced the notion of “authentic architecture” that met the *demand for meaning* by responding to the *genius loci,* by embodying local circumstances, by understanding the character of place, and by generating the spatial aspects of the “life-world”, in which all human activities take place.[97] **(Figure 2.5)** According to Norberg-Schulz, many architects since the earliest period of modern architecture cultivated “authentic architecture”, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, Louis Kahn and Jørn Utzon, and including the so called postmodern camp of Robert Venturi, Paolo Portoghesi, Robert Stern and Michael Graves. In this regard, he traced the continuation of the premises of modern architecture rather than introducing postmodernism as a new epoch. Although his understanding of context was not limited to a cultural one, which is responded through symbolism and association, but rather a spatial one, based on the revelation of the characteristics of particular place, his definition of “authentic architecture” was limited mainly to the use of local materials and vernacular forms.

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[95] Christian Norberg-Schulz, “Towards an Authentic Architecture,” in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 21.

[96] Norberg-Schulz, “Towards an Authentic Architecture,” 24.

[97] These definitions were further explained in his famous book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture,* which was published in 1980, the same year as the Biennale. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1980).

Figure 2.5. Norberg-Schulz's examples of authentic architecture. Source: Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Towards an Authentic Architecture," 23.

Jencks was the most fervent supporter of postmodern architecture, which he disseminated widely after the publication of his book *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* in 1977. In his text published in the Biennale's catalogue entitled "Towards Radical Eclecticism," he introduced eclecticism as the main character of postmodern architecture. He defined radical eclecticism as an approach that responds to pluralist society through the simultaneous use of different architectural languages, which differentiates it from the easy and banal eclecticism of 19th century architecture. Opposing the "dumb box" of modern architecture, Jencks argued

that postmodern architecture is “doubly-coded” in its use of other languages, such as vernacular, historical and commercial, in addition to modern. Eclecticism brings the question of pastiche, and Jencks mentioned the importance of distinguishing between the good and bad pastiche. He compared the Dallas Chapel of Philip Johnson and AT&T with the Piazza d’Italia by Charles Moore. According to Jencks, the Dallas Chapel is an example of a bad pastiche in that “it recalls a previous building more than it convinces one that its present re-use of form is inventive and suitable”, and the AT&T building as an example of “banal revivalism”.[98] He gave Piazza d’Italia as a successful example of radical eclecticism, claiming it embodies the three necessary fundamental characteristics: “basis in the context of the building, the character of the functions and the taste-culture of the users”.[99] **(Figure 2.6)**

Similar to Portoghesi, Jencks also considered the user had a central role in architecture, although his position was more populist than that of Portoghesi, since he simply argued for the accommodation of different languages, corresponding to the different taste cultures of the community of users. In other words, radical eclecticism was the most appropriate design approach for Jencks, in that he believed reflecting the pluralities of society was the main task of architects. Context for him was not the discipline’s formal repertoire, as was the case for Portoghesi, nor the vernacular building tradition like Scully or the spatiality of the life-world like Norberg-Schulz. His emphasis was rather on the cultural context, on the use of different symbolic languages that could appeal different tastes of people within a society. In his article, Jencks criticised Rossi for the “misapprehension of popular codes”, and rationalists in general for the disregard of ornament as kitsch.[100] He highlighted rather the important contributions to postmodern architecture, such as the Krier Brothers’ recuperation of traditional urban forms, Colin Rowe’s modern-traditional infill, Erskine and Kroll’s adhocism, Jeremy Dixon’s local contextualism, Hans Hollein’s eclecticism and James Stirling’s urban contextualism.

Jencks was the only critic who mentioned the notion of context in his article, although his definition of postmodern contextualism was very restrictive, since he understood it as the continuation of surrounding street lines, urban texture, building heights, façade organization and materials, etc. In the end, context was not a major point of discussion in the discursive framework of the Biennale. “The presence of the past” as the governing theme of the exhibitions, referred more to the syntactic understanding of architecture. Although each of the four critics had different positions regarding the theme in particular and postmodern architecture in general, they recalled in different ways the recirculation of traditional and historical forms. Among them, Portoghesi’s historicism and Jencks’ eclecticism were more apparent within the aura of the Biennale, especially in its *Strada Novissima* exhibition.

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[98] Charles Jencks, “Towards Radical Eclecticism,” in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 31.

[99] Jencks, “Towards Radical Eclecticism,” 30-33.

[100] Jencks, “Towards Radical Eclecticism,” 33.

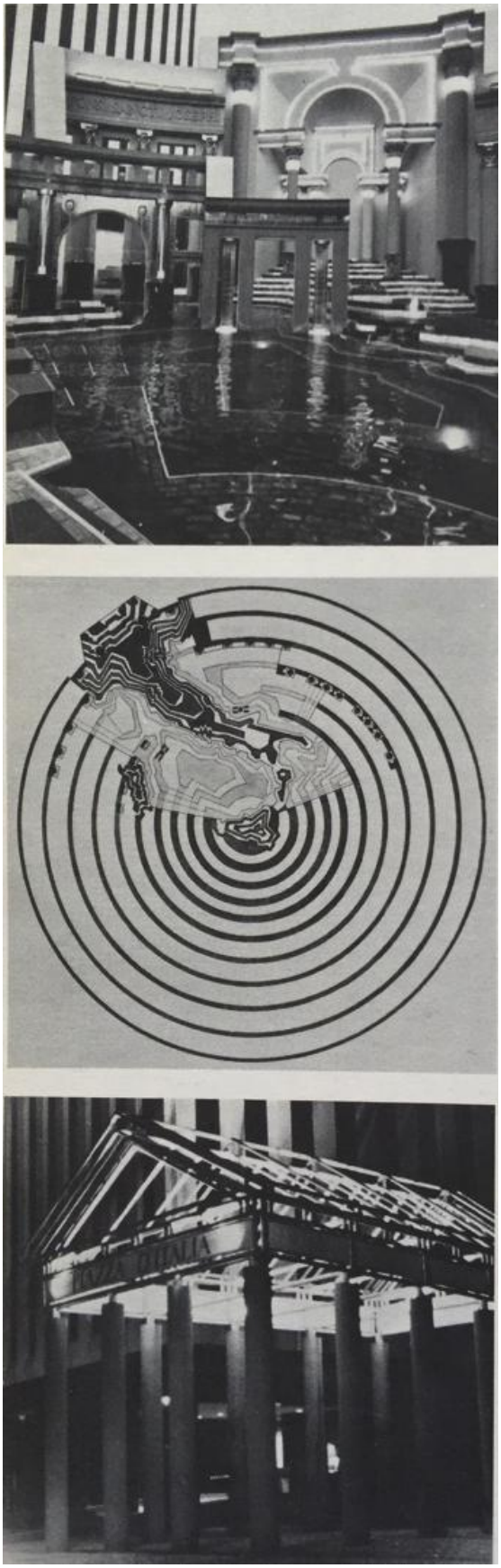

Figure 2.6. Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia. Source: Charles Jencks, "Towards Radical Eclecticism," 32.

Strada Novissima

Figure 2.7. View of the *Strada Novissima*. Source: *Domus* 610 (1980): 10-15.

Strada Novissima, meaning literally the newest street, was the main exhibition of the Biennale, in which 20 façades were presented in the form of a street. **(Figure 2.7)** The idea of the street as a "spatial and representational curating device" was not present until the end of 1979, when Portoghesi came up with the idea while in Berlin in December 1979 attending a seminar organised by Paul Kleihues.[101] During his stay, he visited a Christmas Market in Berlin's Alexander Platz, which served as inspiration for the *Strada Novissima* exhibition, as Portoghesi explains:

> The fair seemed to be a simple eloquent metaphor for the relationship between architect and client, mediated by the group of façades that are also faces, the sign of an identity transferred to an object. In this way, the idea came up for the street inside La Corderia of the Arsenal, a gallery of architectural self-portraits made for play, for rediscovering the very serious game of architecture, a game on which even the quality of our life depends somewhat.[102]

The street and façade concept of the exhibition had several relevancies with the theme of the Biennale. First, designing a real street with façades constructed in 1/1 scale provided "a direct tactile and spatial" experience for the visitors, which represented ultimately Portoghesi's

[101] Léa-Catherine Szacka, "The 1980 Architecture Biennale: *The Street as a Spatial and Representational Curating Device*," *OASE* 88 (2012): 14.

[102] Portoghesi, "The End of Prohibitionism," 12.

assertion that architecture is not only for architects but also for the community of its users.[103] Second, it was a reminder of the street as a significant element of traditional European urbanism.[104] That said, by alienating the concept of street from its urban, social and political context, Portoghesi introduced the street as a stage set with *scaenae frons* (scenic front) in the *Strada Novissima*.

The idea of façades as scenic fronts was adopted from the old Venetian tradition of ephemeral décor, in addition to the temporary urban furnishings of fair architecture. However, the street as a stage also referred literally to the theatre set designs. *Scaenae frons* is the background of a Roman theatre stage, a decorated façade, two or three stories high. The hybridization of decorative façades with the idea of the street was uniquely achieved at Teatro Olimpico, a section drawing of which was used on the cover of the Biennale catalogue. This was the last work by Andrea Palladio, which was completed posthumously by Vincenzo Scamozzi who designed its stage set, and it is known to be one of the oldest surviving theatre stage sets. Scamozzi designed a street view behind the central archway of the *scaenae frons* of the theatre that resembled the streets of antique cities. **(Figure 2.8)** Its perspective created the illusion of looking down a long street that was in fact only a couple of meters deep. *Strada Novissima* was, in a way, providing the spatial experience of this décor street almost four centuries later. This idea of décor was not just a metaphor, since workers on the Cinecittà in Rome, the famous Italian film studio, constructed the façades of the *Strada Novissima* using temporary materials. In *Strada Novissima*, architecture was reduced to the design of a very thin skin.

A total of 20 architects were invited to design a façade for “The Presence of the Past” exhibition in a letter sent on 20 February, 2016. **(Figure 2.9)** The invited architects were: GRAU, Bofill, Dardi, Gehry, Gordon Smith, Geenberg, Graves, Hollein, Isozaki, Kleihues, Koolhaas, Krier, Moore, Portzamparc, Purini, Stern, Stirling, Tigermann, Ungers and Venturi. Among them, only Stirling declined the invitation, sending a telegram on March 10 stating “Regret due to work load at this time we are unable to take part in exhibition of architecture.”[105] Upon a second invitation, Stirling sent another telegram dated 22 April in which he wrote, “Received your cable. Not participating.”[106] **(Figure 2.10)** Stirling, who had received the RIBA Gold Medal that year, was the only architect that declined to participate. Later, Scolari replaced Stirling and Portoghesi replaced Portzamparc, who was not present at

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[103] Portoghesi, “The End of Prohibitionism,” 12.

[104] *Strada Novissima* was a direct reference to Strada Nuova (New Street) of Genova (known as Via Garibeldi since 1882), a mid-16th century street hosting the palaces of the city’s most important families. Also known as "la Via Aurea" (the Golden Street), it is one of the grand representatives of the Renaissance idea that the street is an urban theater. See: George L. Gorse, “A Classical Stage for the Old Nobility: The Strada Nuova and Sixteenth-Century Genoa,” *The Art Bulletin* 79/2 (1997): 303.

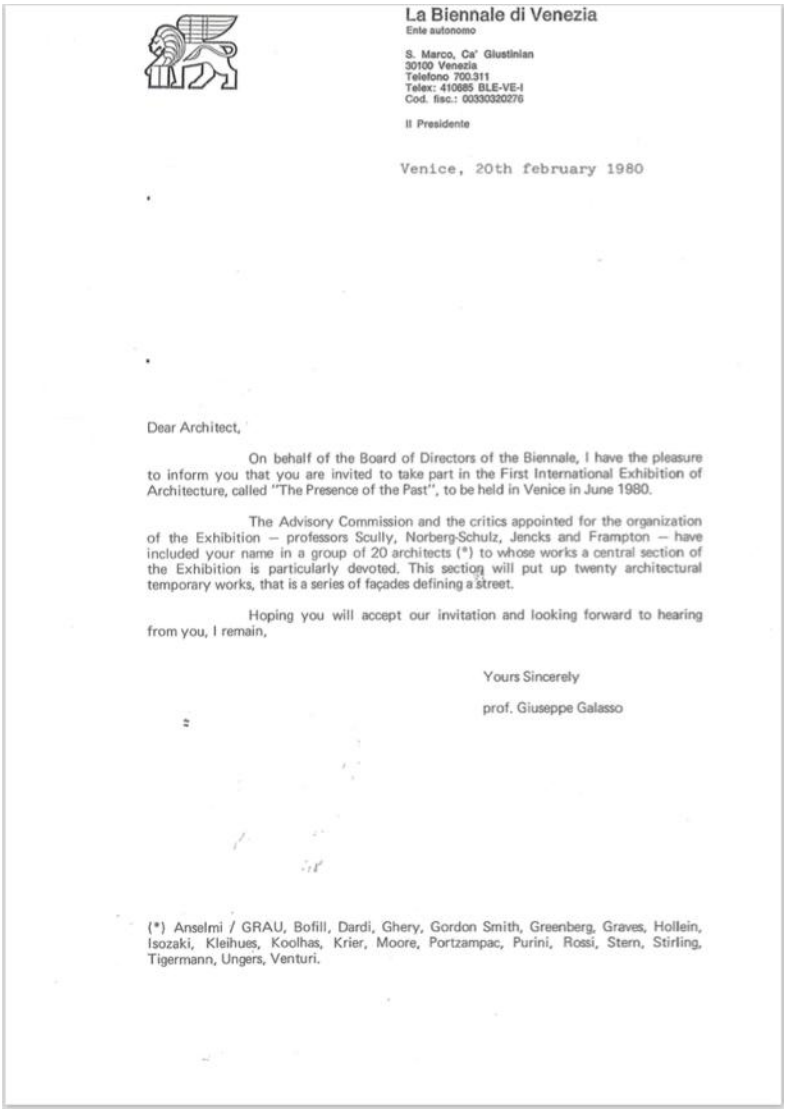
[105] Stirling’s telegram, Box 658, ASAC.

[106] Stirling’s telegram, Box 658, ASAC.

the Venice Biennale.[107] In another letter, the architects were informed about the design regulations and the exhibition space. No fixed function was assigned as a theme for the façade design: it could represent the front of a dwelling, the architect's personal museum, or a part of a building designed for entertainment, meetings, etc. The budget was designated at around $4.000 for each façade, and although no particular building technique was specified, the architects were advised to use low-cost and easily obtainable materials. The size specifications of the façades were dictated by the architecture of the Corderia: The street was 4.5 m wide, which is the distance between the central columns in the transversal section; the façades had to be 7 m long; and the distance between the central columns of the Corderia in the longitudinal direction and height could vary from 7.2 m to 9.5 m and be up to three stories. In the end, the street was composed of décor like façades, which, although approaching to the theme "the presence of the past" from different angles, created a unified image in line with the premises of postmodern architecture. **(Figure 2.11)**

Figure 2.8. Teatro Olimpico's stage set, which was designed as street scenery by Vincenzo Scamozzi. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Teatro_olimpico,_scena_15.JPG

[107] Portzamparc's and additionally Fernando Montes' facades later became part of the show when *Strada Novissima* was exhibited in the form of a piazza at the Saint Louis Chapel of the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris between 15 October and 20 December, 1981 (only 12 facades from Venice were there: Portoghesi, Bofill, GRAU, Graves, Hollein, Krier, Kleihues, Moore, Purini, Stern, Greenberg, and Ungers). *Strada Novissima* was later exhibited again in San Francisco between 20 May and 29 July, 1982 at Fort Mason, with the only exception being the facade of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. For further information on the Paris and San Francisco exhibitions, see: Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale" (PhD diss., University College London, Bartlett School of Architecture, 2012).



La Biennale di Venezia
Ente autonomo

S. Marco, Ca' Giustinian
30100 Venezia
Telefono 700.311
Telex: 410685 BLE-VE-I
Cod. fisc.: 00330320276

Il Presidente

Venice, 20th february 1980

Dear Architect,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Biennale, I have the pleasure to inform you that you are invited to take part in the First International Exhibition of Architecture, called "The Presence of the Past", to be held in Venice in June 1980.

The Advisory Commission and the critics appointed for the organization of the Exhibition – professors Scully, Norberg-Schulz, Jencks and Frampton – have included your name in a group of 20 architects (*) to whose works a central section of the Exhibition is particularly devoted. This section will put up twenty architectural temporary works, that is a series of façades defining a street.

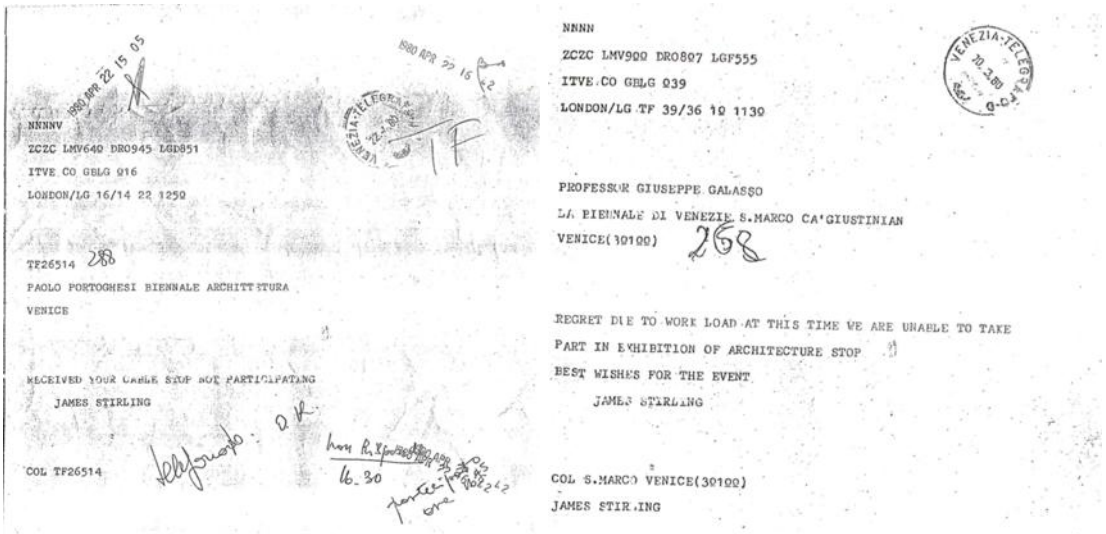
Hoping you will accept our invitation and looking forward to hearing from you, I remain,

Yours Sincerely

prof. Giuseppe Galasso

(*) Anselmi / GRAU, Bofill, Dardi, Ghery, Gordon Smith, Greenberg, Graves, Hollein, Isozaki, Kleihues, Koolhas, Krier, Moore, Portzampac, Purini, Rossi, Stern, Stirling, Tigermann, Ungers, Venturi.

Figure 2.9. Letter of invitation sent to the architects on the February 20. ASAC, Box 579.



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TF26514
PAOLO PORTOGHESI BIENNALE ARCHITETTURA
VENICE

RECEIVED YOUR CABLE STOP NOT PARTICIPATING
JAMES STIRLING

COL TF26514

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PROFESSOR GIUSEPPE GALASSO
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIE S.MARCO CA'GIUSTINIAN
VENICE(30100)

REGRET DUE TO WORK LOAD AT THIS TIME WE ARE UNABLE TO TAKE PART IN EXHIBITION OF ARCHITECTURE STOP
BEST WISHES FOR THE EVENT
JAMES STIRLING

COL S.MARCO VENICE(30100)
JAMES STIRLING

Figure 2.10. Stirling's telegrams sent to Portoghesi. ASAC, Box 658.

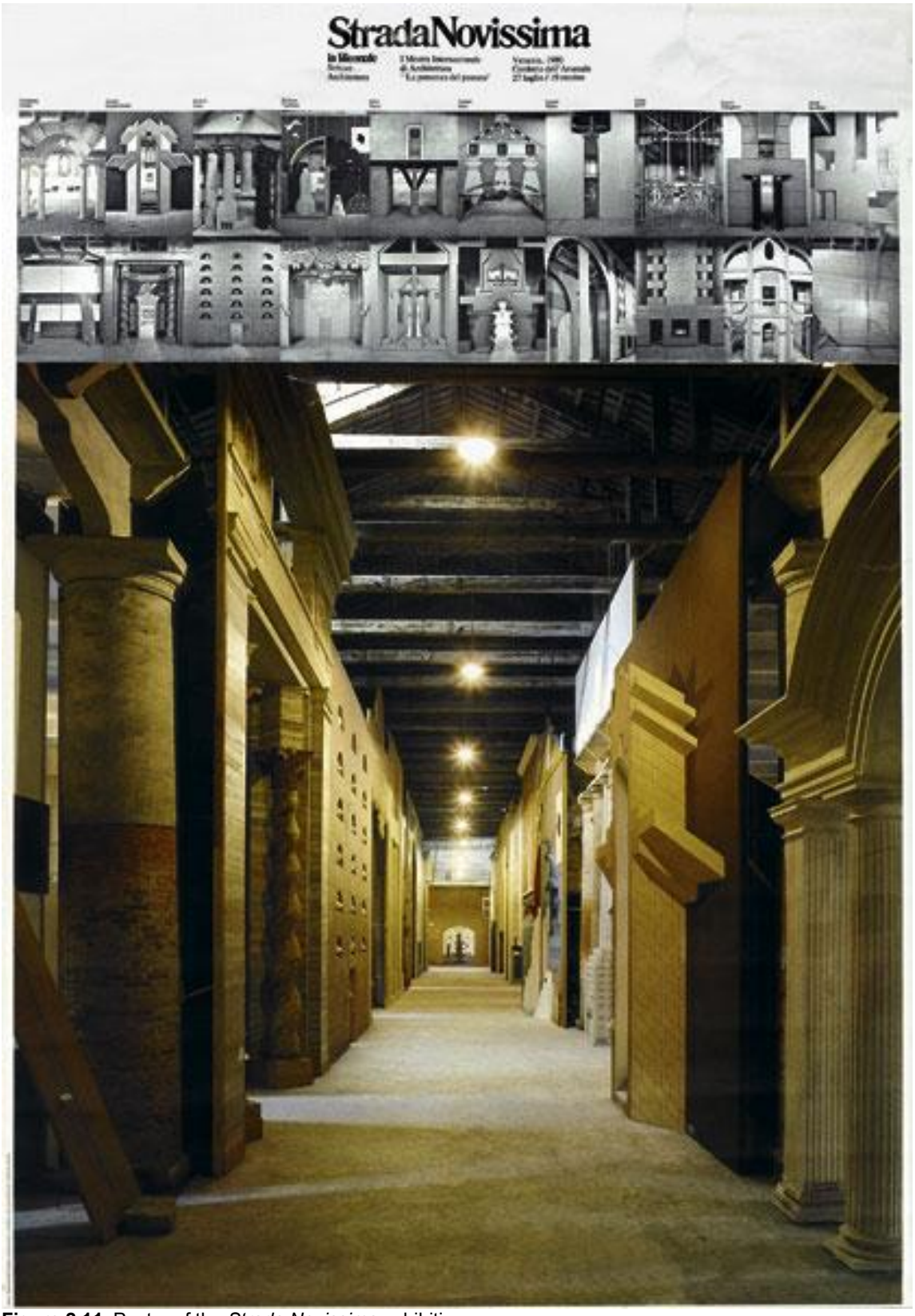

Figure 2.11. Poster of the *Strada Novissima* exhibition.

Twenty *Scaenae Frons*

Allan Greenberg designed the most porous façade in the exhibition, composed of four classical columns with an arch pediment. **(Figure 2.12)** Avoiding iconography and decoration, he used elements of classical architecture, arguing that architectural forms should communicate and express "the meaning and the significance of the institutions they house" and "the most highly developed language of form available to us for this purpose is the classical language of architecture".[108] Thomas Gordon Smith also utilised architectural elements from history, in his case Solomonic columns and concave forms, which could be found especially in the works of Baroque architects Bernini and Borromini. **(Figure 2.13)** His façade recalled Bernini's Baldacchino, a Baroque bronze canopy located in St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, which was inspired by the old Solomonic columns brought by Constantine the Great. Gordon Smith's interest was in the formal catalogue of past architectural forms, stating, "I am passionate, however, about the elements of architecture which have been available to architects throughout history and I am excited by the opportunity to design buildings with this wide vocabulary which solve today's problems and convey spiritual content".[109]

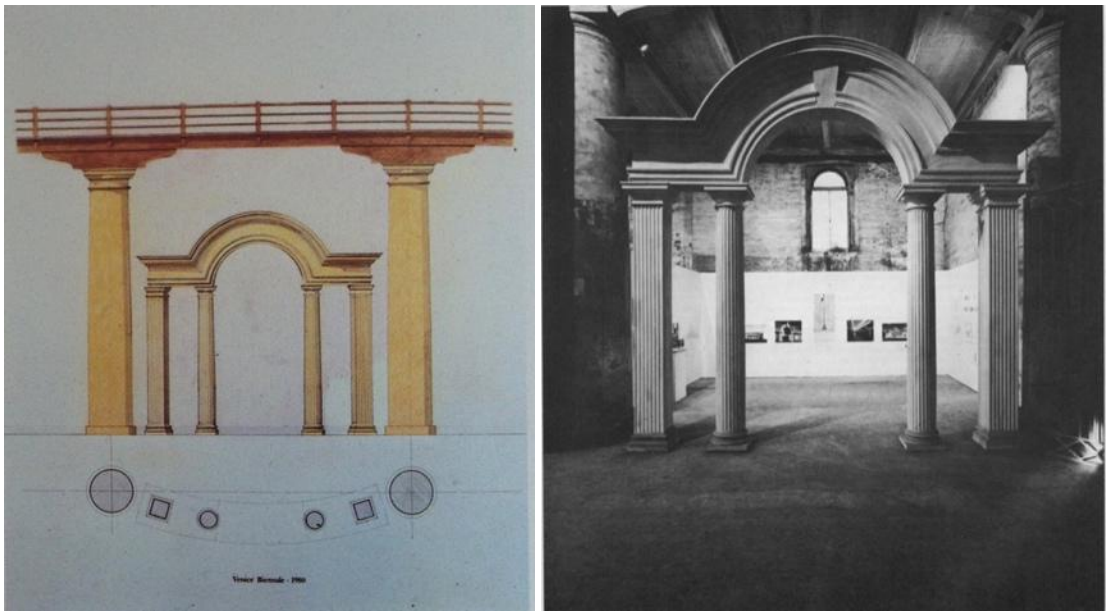

Figure 2.12. Allan Greenberg's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 42 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[108] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 176.

[109] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 285.

Figure 2.13. Left: Thomas Gordon Smith's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Right: St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Sources: https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/ and Martin Belam's cropped photo from flicker.

These two American architects were the only contributors to the exhibition that designed façades in a straight revivalist fashion. Architectural elements were pulled out of their original physical, social and cultural contexts and resurrected independently from space and time. In this regard, the architects considered architecture to be a language, and its historical forms as elements of a pure formal vocabulary. Furthermore, it was a very selective history, covering the Greek and Roman architecture of classical antiquity and its re-articulation in the Renaissance. It was an understanding of history that was not progressive, but cyclic. Modernity was ignored, as if it never happened, and modernist language was abandoned. Even the vocabulary was very restrictive, as by only reviving elements of classical architecture without any critical intervention, no attempts were made to expand it. In their approaches, context was defined implicitly through historical architectural elements, forms and compositions. Neither the Corderia building, as an immediate physical context, nor the disciplinary context, as current modes of architectural practice addressing contemporary social, political and economic conditions, were acknowledged in their designs.

Michael Graves criticised modern architecture for "undermining figural references in favour of non-figural or abstract geometries."[110] His façade symbolised the human body, with the ground referring to legs, the *piano nobile* referring to the body and heart, and the attic level referring to the head. **(Figure 2.14)** A large sconce was located at the centre to emphasise the entrance and also to act as a balcony, and more symbolic associations were intended to be achieved through the use of colour, such as the green framing of the columns representing the landscape, terracotta representing the earthen source, and light ochre representing the use of travertine and limestone surfacing in Italy. Charles Moore was also known for his use of direct symbolism for association, as exaggerated in his Piazza d'Italia project. He stated

[110] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 170.

that buildings' "images, and direction, and content will have to come mostly from people's memories and imaginations and will therefore embrace the Past, individual and collective, historic and imaginary".[111] However, Moore's façade at the Biennale was more abstract in its symbolism when compared to his previous projects. Rather than providing direct associations, he designed his façade as an abstract composition with polychromatic arrangements of overlapping arches. **(Figure 2.15)**

Robert Stern applied an eclectic language in his design by referring to different pasts, stating that "the past is treated both as recent past – addressing the work of our office, and as distant past – addressing the history of architecture".[112] He designed the façade as a proscenium, in which the columns were used as an abstraction of a stage curtain. **(Figure 2.16)** The entrance was shaped like a rusticated column, which he had used previously in his house design at Llewellyn Park, and he also added an abstraction of a Greek temple, quoting previous projects such as the Best Products Façade of 1979. Similar to Stern, Stanley Tigerman also designed the façade like a proscenium in which the shape of a theatre curtain was drawn and cut from a cardboard-like plane, and a series of classical columns were drawn in perspective on another plane emphasizing the entrance in the middle. **(Figure 2.17)** Tigerman criticised European approaches as being "utopian, normative and inaccessible", while glorifying the American populism for being "open, optimistic, extrinsic and emotional".[113] Accordingly, he designed the façade literally as a theatre stage, without any abstraction or spatial interpretation.

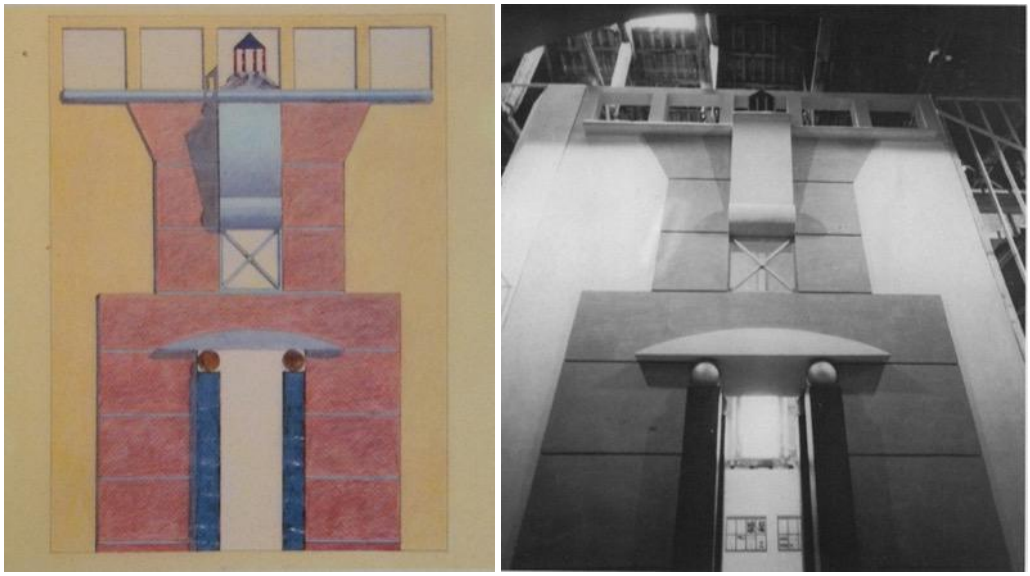

Figure 2.14. Michael Graves' façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 42 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[111] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 240.

[112] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 289.

[113] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 306.

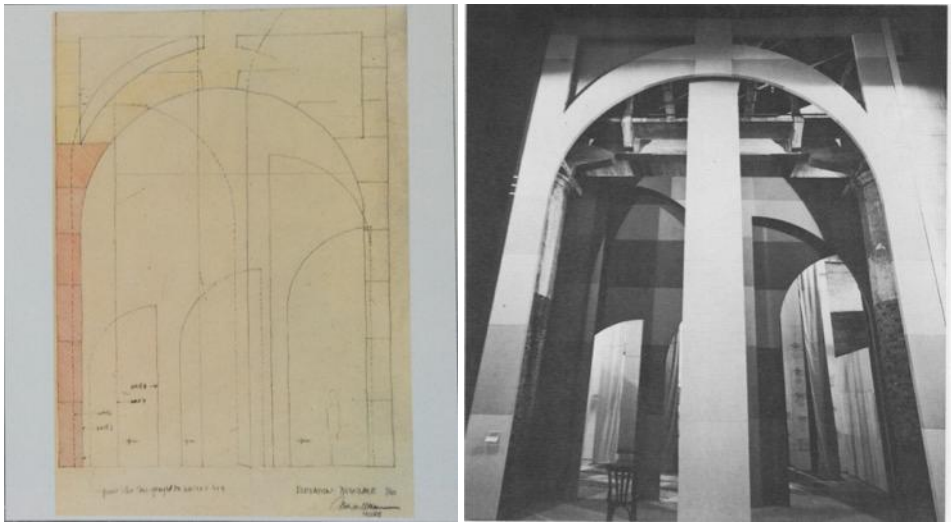

Figure 2.15. Charles Moore's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 45 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

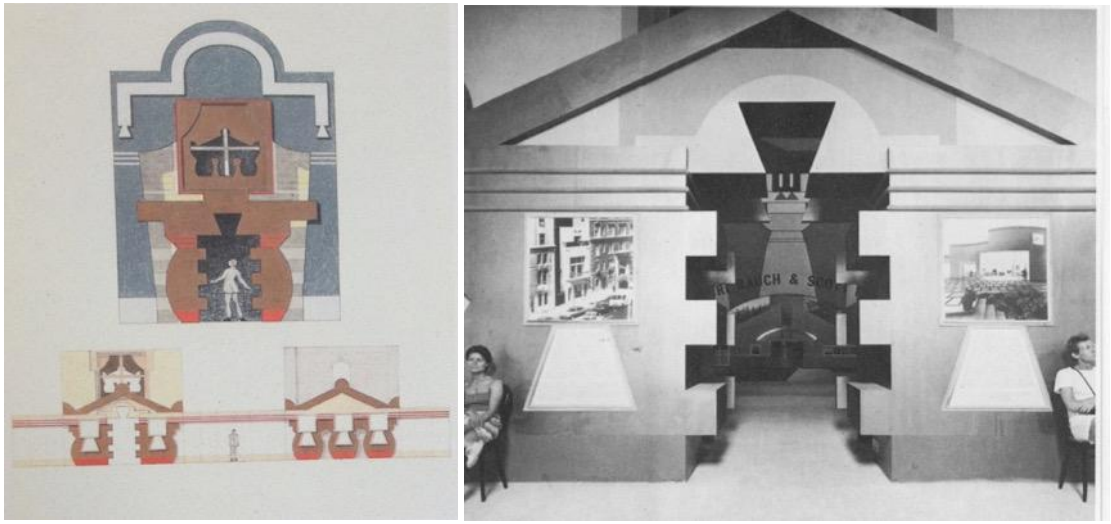

Figure 2.16. Robert Stern's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 47 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

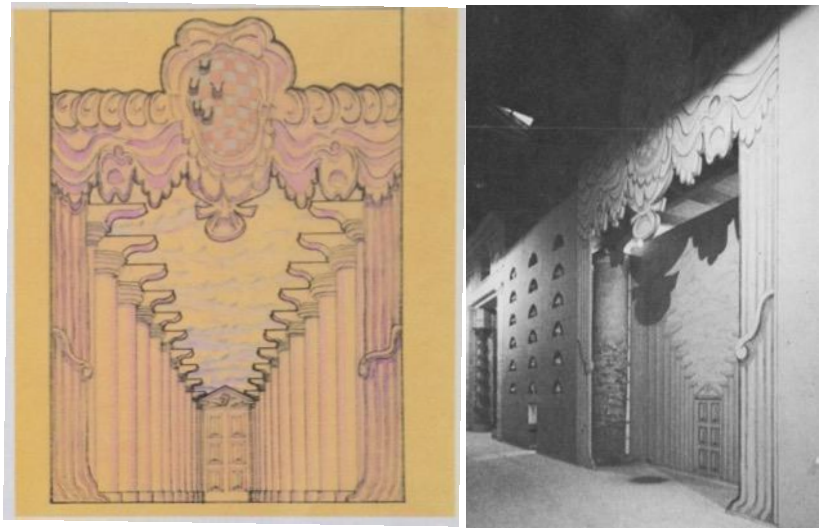

Figure 2.17. Stanley Tigerman's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 47 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

All these four above-mentioned well-known American architects referred to historical architectural elements in their façades, although unlike the straight revivalists, they did not resurrect these elements and forms directly, but rather represented them on a two-dimensional plane. Moore's arches, Stern's pediment or Tigerman's columns were not structural but mere cardboard, meaning that historical architectural elements were stripped of their original contexts, structural function and formal-spatial characteristics, becoming rather appliques on the façades. Here architecture was again understood as a language, although its vocabulary was not limited to the architecture of the classical antiquity, since different past vocabularies were used simultaneously. The aim of this eclectic use of past forms was to communicate with a wider public by evoking associations. Context was defined as the cultural realm of communication as evoked through the use of past formal vocabulary. Since the prime goal was communication, emphasis was not on the formal and spatial features of the past elements, but on the contemporary techniques of their representation.

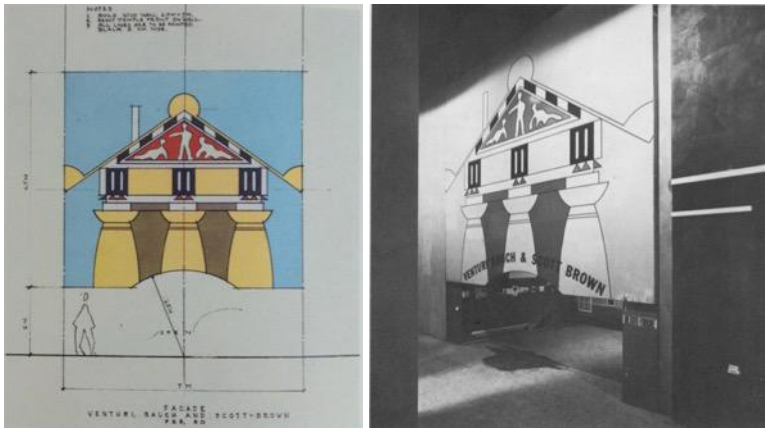

Figure 2.18. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 48 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

When understanding context as a cultural domain in which buildings communicate to the public, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's façade can be considered the most appropriate among the American architects. If the presence of the past was a matter of communication, then the façade could serve well as a billboard advertising what was behind. In this regard, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's façade had the most commercial language, representing classical vocabulary through the use of pop art techniques. This surface was a detached element in their works, in that they used "architectural appliqué that recalls history and place, and stands distinct from the structure, function, and form of the building it is on".[114] They designed the façade as an extremely thin two-dimensional surface, resembling a Greek temple at the front with three oversised Doric columns, and carrying a pediment with a design of three abstract human figures, and the name of their firm was written above the entrance, advertising their works exhibited inside. **(Figure 2.18)** Since the façade was designed out of

[114] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 328.

only cardboard or wallpaper, the entrance to the exhibition behind was not via the spaces in-between the columns, but through a space cut away from below. This revealed that the surface was only cardboard, and neither structural nor formal, and in this regard, it can be argued that it was critical in being self-aware of its use of quotations, pastiche, symbolism and iconography.

The design of the façade using two-dimensional cardboard was also visible in the entries of Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill and German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers. Bofill designed a very opaque symmetrical façade that adopted the elements and proportions of classical Renaissance architecture, which for him offered the strongest disciplinary context. **(Figure 2.19)** He defined his architectural approach, which was prominently visible in his façade design, as: bringing back "to life the architecture of the past", "to prefabricate the Renaissance", "to adopt the rules of divine proportions" and to use "strict geometry" with a "Pythagorean rigour".[115] His billboard façade was different to that of the Americans in that his emphasis was on the proportions and geometry of the classical architectural elements rather than their ironic, distorted and eclectic use. Ungers referred to the architectural elements that could be found in the immediate physical context of the historical Corderia building, designing his façade as a smooth surface with only a single opening in the shape of the existing columns of the Corderia. **(Figure 2.20)** This served as at the central axis, and also directed the eye towards the window on the façade at the back of the exhibition area. Ungers wrote one of the longest texts for the Biennale's catalogue in which he argued for "architecture's right to an autonomous language", free from economic, social, cultural and technological circumstances.[116] Although Ungers was one of the few participants that referred to the immediate physical context in his design, the simple abstraction of the Corderia's column was in fact a reference to architecture's own self-reflexive syntactic context.

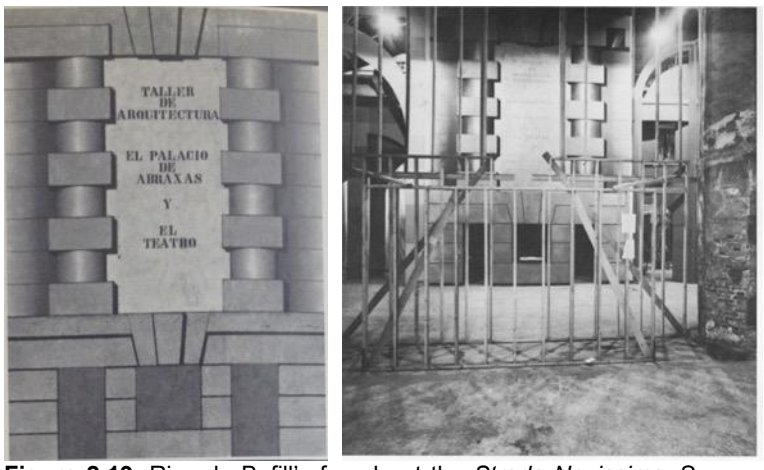

Figure 2.19. Ricardo Bofill's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 40 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[115] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 98.

[116] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 319.

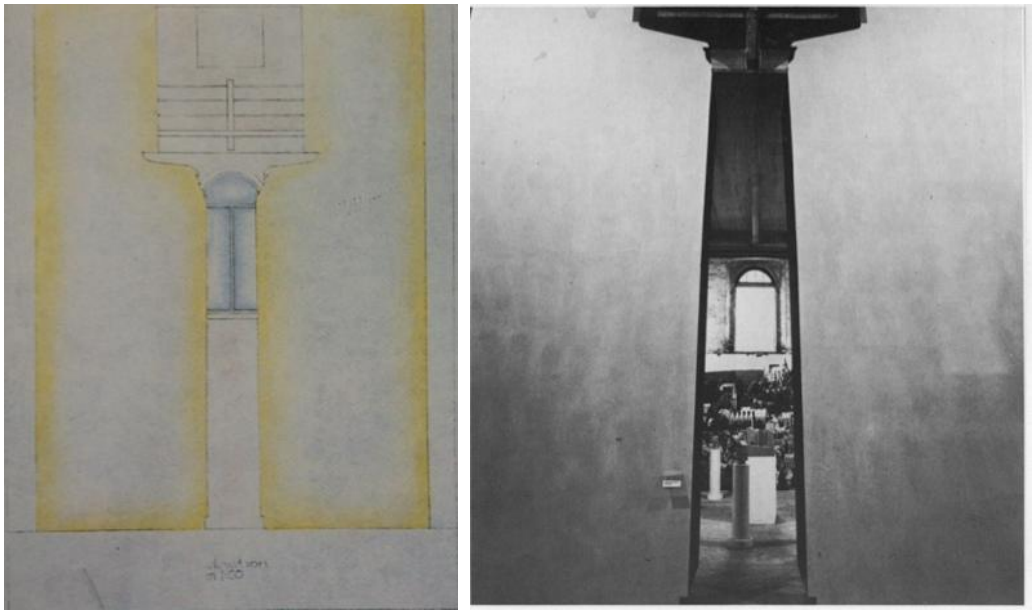

Figure 2.20. Oswald Mathias Ungers' façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 48 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

The reference to the columns of the Corderia was much more explicit in Viennese architect Hans Hollein's façade. Hollein broke the rule against covering the existing columns of the Corderia, adding four other columns in between: one representing Philibert de l'Orme's tree column, another alluding to Adolf Loos' 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower, one covered with grass, and the other with a marble look, suspended to provide a space for entry underneath. **(Figure 2.21)** Hollein referred to the theme "the presence of the past" as "an architecture of memories, memories not only in the sense of architectural history, but memories of one's cultural heritage and of one's personal past – manifesting themselves in quotations, transformations and metaphors" but also "as a presence of the past as found in the 'corderia' – the columns".[117] In this regard, his approach was eclectic and full of irony, similar to his American counterparts, although it differed from other eclectic approaches that used figurative elements on planar surfaces by making a more spatial interpretation of historical elements. In most press reviews of the exhibition, Hollein's façade was announced as the winner for its witty composition and its reference to the immediate physical context by incorporating the columns of the Corderia. In fact, his use of the existing columns was not simply a direct contextual gesture, in that the column was used as an instrument to reflect upon the disciplinary context of architecture, consisting of primary elements, different materials, buildings, and so on, and the architect's own personal choice from this catalogue.

[117] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 189.

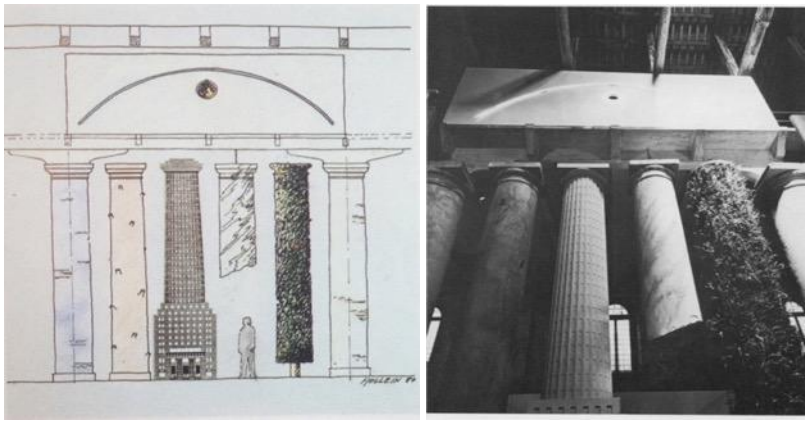

Figure 2.21. Hans Hollein's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 43 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

Next to Hollein's was German architect Josef Paul Kleihues' façade, which also adopted different interpretations of columns: one in the shape of a building, another a broken half-wooden column and a short conical one with window like openings. **(Figure 2.22)** These elements were, however, not space-defining structural elements, but rather sculptures in the landscape. This image was strengthened further by a cardboard backdrop depicting a garden with a blue sky, stars, clouds, a tree and a piece of floor mosaic. He designed a colourful eclectic façade with a collage of figurative elements, similar to a theatre set or a children's book illustration, evoking a dream like place. Kleihues also emphasised the "spiritual/intellectual need of men to communicate; with image and Architectural language".[118] In this regard, he both emphasised architecture's own formal vocabulary and its representation as an image that could communicate by evoking associations, and in doing so, was referring both to the syntactic context of the discipline and the cultural context through poetic symbolism.

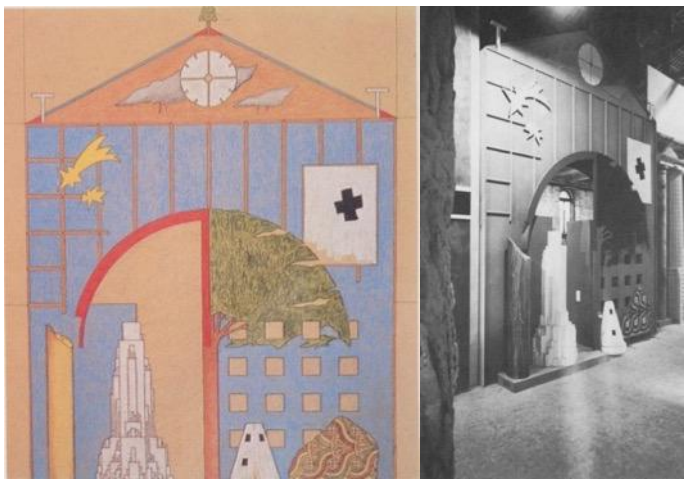

Figure 2.22. Josef Paul Kleihues' façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 43 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[118] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 208.

The references to nature as the primary context of architecture were much more explicit in Italian neo-rationalist architects Franco Purini and Laura Thermes' façade. In their design, Purini and Thermes recalled Laugier's primitive hut, the classical archetype, using a tree trunk column at the centre of the façade. **(Figure 2.23)** They were the only ones that presented their façade not as a two-dimensional detached surface but as the face of a three dimensional volume, "an isolated house inserted into a landscape capable of being the landscape common to the two cities": Rome (the city they are coming from) and Venice (the city in which the Biennale took place).[119] Rather than referencing the architecture and urban texture of these cities, Purini and Thermes referred to the imaginary historical landscapes of Rome and Venice, but rather than reviving any classical architectural vocabulary, they opted to use primitive forms in their façade. In this regard, their emphasis was also on the disciplinary context, although not the historical architectural elements of classical antiquity, but instead the abstract models of primitive architecture from a more distant past. A rigid geometric composition could also be seen in the façade of Massimo Scolari, another Italian neo-rationalist architect. His façade drawing resembled a surreal painting in which the context of the architectural intervention was again a landscape. **(Figure 2.24)** He designed the face as the gate to a maritime city that became the portal to his exhibition space. The disciplinary context for Scolari was not only the forms of architecture, but also its representational means. Being also a painter, he was "interested in the problems of representing architecture" and hence designed the façade as an "axonometric image".[120]

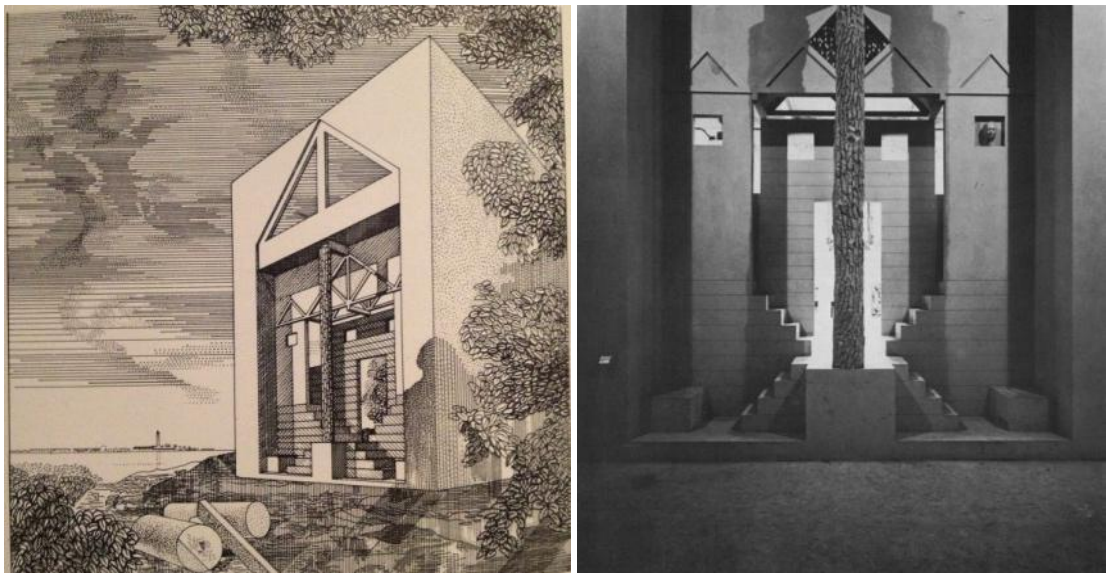

Figure 2.23. Franco Purini and Laura Thermes' façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 266 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[119] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 265.

[120] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 281.

Figure 2.24. Massimo Scolari's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 46 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

The emphasis on nature, primitive forms, and architectural representation can also be seen in Italian architectural group GRAU's (Gruppo Romano Architetti Urbanisti) façade. Like many European neo-rationalist architects, they reflected on the theme "the presence of the past" through the use of primitive forms rather than playing with the easy shuffling of different styles and languages. However, their approach was not metaphoric and poetic but rather realist and ideological. In collaboration with sculptor Enzo Rosato and painter Franco Mulas, they designed the façade to resemble a pagan columbarium, including a wall with niches that were filled with vases. By referring to the neo-Marxist "discovery of the historical real as the eternal present of testimonies", they introduced "nature-history as the eliminable dialectic context of the work."[121] In this façade, Rosato used vases to depict the nature-history experienced in his childhood in Grottaglie, where the local economy was based on ceramic production. **(Figure 2.25)** They abandoned direct quotations from history by defining history not as the catalogue of forms, but rather as a praxis embodying the social and natural worlds. In this regard, they both referred to the disciplinary context as having an autonomous language that consisted of rationalised and pure geometric forms, and context as the nature-history of pre-existing environments, having layers of different social praxis. However, the abstraction of nature-history here represented only the designer's own personal memory of a specific time and place.

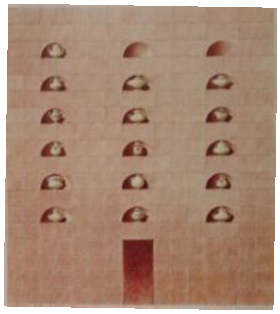

Figure 2.25. GRAU's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Source: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 41 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[121] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 164.

Costantino Dardi and OMA designed the most modernist façades of the street, and these were also among the few without a symmetrical composition. Italian architect Dardi's façade had the most minimalist, geometric and abstract composition, designing it not as a two-dimensional surface, but more like a thick plane in which the particular depth of the openings provided a play of light and shadow, of which he said "the historicity of architecture is also the historicity of the light that passes over its surfaces…".[122] **(Figure 2.26)** Both his geometrical organization of the façade and his comments on light were a direct reference to Le Corbusier, who, in his *Towards a New Architecture*, began the chapter "Three Reminders to Architects: I. Mass" (the other two are Surface and Plan), stating:

> *Our eyes are constructed to enable us to see forms in light.*
> *Primary forms are beautiful forms because they can be clearly appreciated.*
> *Architects to-day no longer achieve these simple forms.*
> *Working by calculation, engineers employ geometrical forms, satisfying our eyes by their geometry and our understanding by their mathematics; their work is on the direct line of good art.*[123]

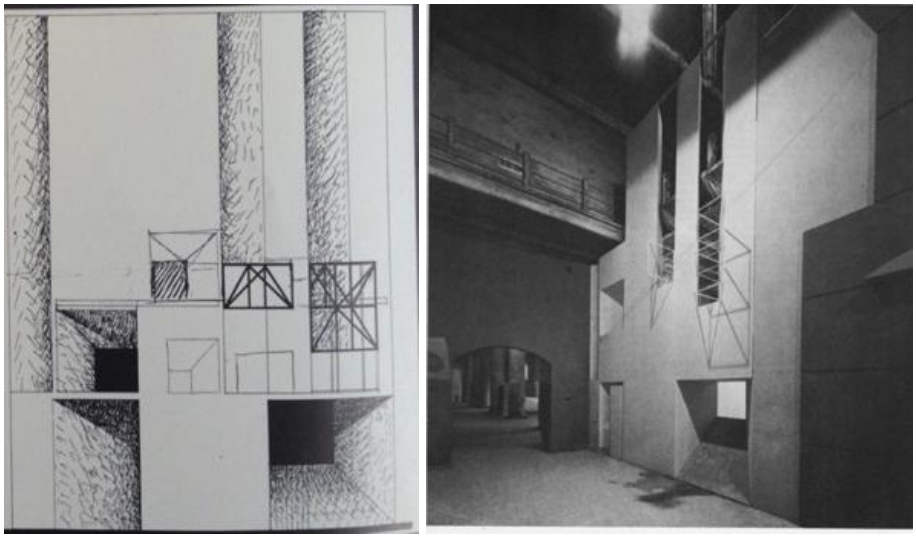

Figure 2.26. Costantino Dardi's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 40 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

Dardi's understanding of context was similar to that of Modernist architects who tended to disregard its formal, spatial or cultural aspects by considering only the physical aspects of a site, such as light, orientation and size. OMA's façade, designed by Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, was like a screen, constructed out of undulating white fabric pinned on one side to permit entrance. The name of the firm was displayed in a neon sign that read "*AMO"* from the rear, which means "love" in Latin. Koolhaas sought to preserve and revise the modernist tradition of functionalism in his design, and was therefore critical of the postmodern historicist

[122] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 137.

[123] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: BN Publishing, 2008), 24.

and typological approaches.[124] **(Figure 2.27)** In this regard, context was relevant only in terms of its programmatic dimension. Both Dardi's and OMA's façades abandoned the use of classical architectural elements, preferring rather to adopt a modernist vocabulary.

Figure 2.27. OMA's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 44 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

In his façade design, Paolo Portoghesi recalled Venetian architecture with a Baroque composition of concave and convex forms.[125] **(Figure 2.28)** The façade had a symmetrical organization of windows and doors, representing the front elevation of a dwelling's, and in this regard, he referred to context as traditional architecture. In fact, Luxembourgian architect Léon Krier provided a more direct reference to Venetian architecture in his façade design, designing it not as a two-dimensional surface, but rather as a section of a dwelling showing its exterior public face as well as its traditional construction methods. **(Figure 2.29)** The façade was elevated on a massive timber foundation that allowed entry to the inner exhibition space, while the roof cornices and the white framing around the windows and door recalled the traditional architectural elements of Venetian houses. Krier stated: "Each project that I have done is a manifesto about a particular tactic of reconstruction, either on the scale of architecture and building, or on the scale of the entire city. All these projects lead me to formulate very simple theses which are the basis of all reconstruction work."[126] Here, a Venetian house was reconstructed and its construction technique was presented. Entering

[124] 34 years after his participation at the *Strada Novissima*, Koolhaas was appointed curator of the Biennale 2014. In the opening statement of his catalogue essay, he wrote: "When I was asked, in 1979, to be part of the first architectural Biennale in 1980, I thought it was probably a mistake. I did not know its director, Paolo Portoghesi, and given his theme – *The Presence of the Past* – I could not imagine having anything to contribute. It made me nervous that each structure in the show was crowned by a pediment… What felt to many like the recuperation of traditional architectural values felt to me like the end of architecture as we knew it." Rem Koolhaas, "Fundamentals: Architecture not Architects," in *Fundamentals Catalogue* (Venice: Marsilio, 2014), 17.

[125] His facade was not included in the Biennale catalogue.

[126] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 217.

Krier's exhibition space not via the door of the house but through its foundations was a metaphorical representation of his argument on reconstruction. Neither Portoghesi nor Krier used decoration or iconography in their façades, since they defined context as past architectural tradition that was not restrictive to particular histories and their elements.

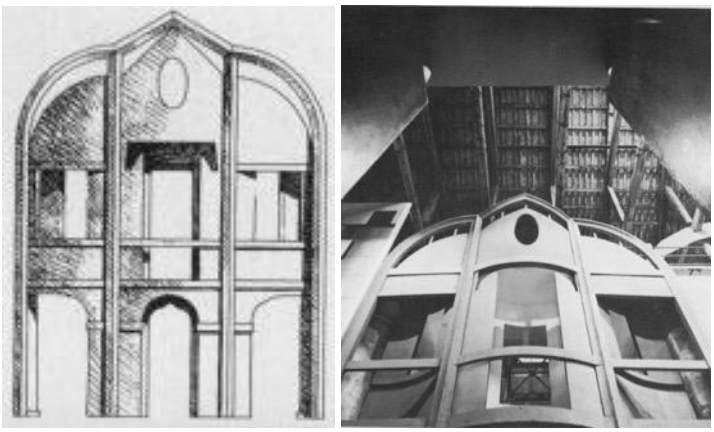

Figure 2.28. Paolo Portoghesi's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Source: https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

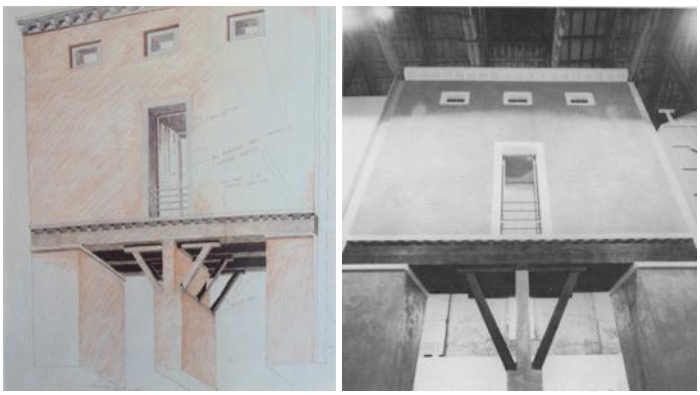

Figure 2.29. Léon Krier's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 44 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

The façade of the only non-Westerner contributing to the show, Arata Isozaki, was conceived as the "most foreign" on the street, resembling traditional Japanese houses. The façade was designed as a timber fence that acted as a gate to the garden of a house. Isozaki stated, "The façade was usually composed of the minimum of elements so as to signify the minimum expression of meaning."[127] **(Figure 2.30)** Unlike his Western counterparts, his aim was not to provide a direct and maximal expression of meaning, but rather to evoke more subtle associations. In this regard, the past is present not through the revival of the architectural elements of a particular historical period, but through its persistent continuous social and physical practices, which have become part of a long-lasting tradition. In this regard, his façade for the *Strada Novissima* considered context neither as a formal catalogue of the

[127] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past,* 194.

discipline, nor the immediate physical context, but rather as the local vernacular tradition. American architect Frank O. Gehry also referred to the local vernacular tradition of his place of origin, being East Coast America. He designed the façade as a rough timber frame, mimicking the traditional way used in California, especially in mass housing projects. The timber frame was like a perspective drawing, and had the window of the Corderia as its focal point. **(Figure 2.31)**

Gehry's façade was one of the least admired along the street. Peter Davey, the editor of the journal *Architectural Review*, referred to Gehry's façade as "the most elementary",[128] while Charles Jencks referred to Gehry as a misfit in his initial writings on the Biennale during the 1980s. According to him, Gehry was a late modernist, not a postmodernist, and claimed that he had been selected for the exhibition because of Philip Johnson and Robert Stern.[129] Hence, Gehry's minimal use of elements and expression of meaning was rendered unacceptable within the framework of the exhibition. It was perhaps due to this that Gehry himself was reluctant to be part of the exhibition after seeing the other projects in the *Strada Novissima* upon his arrival in Venice. Portoghesi has recently recalled this moment:

> Gehry too was unsure about the project, and certainly against the idea. After he arrived in Venice he decided not to participate, for the reason that the façade was too simple. I convinced him to take part in the end, and his turned out to be one of the most interesting façades, and one that had a critical meaning. In a certain sense, his was more close to my idea. In the Gehry façade was the memory of American architecture, something original in the sense of an essence, a tradition.[130]

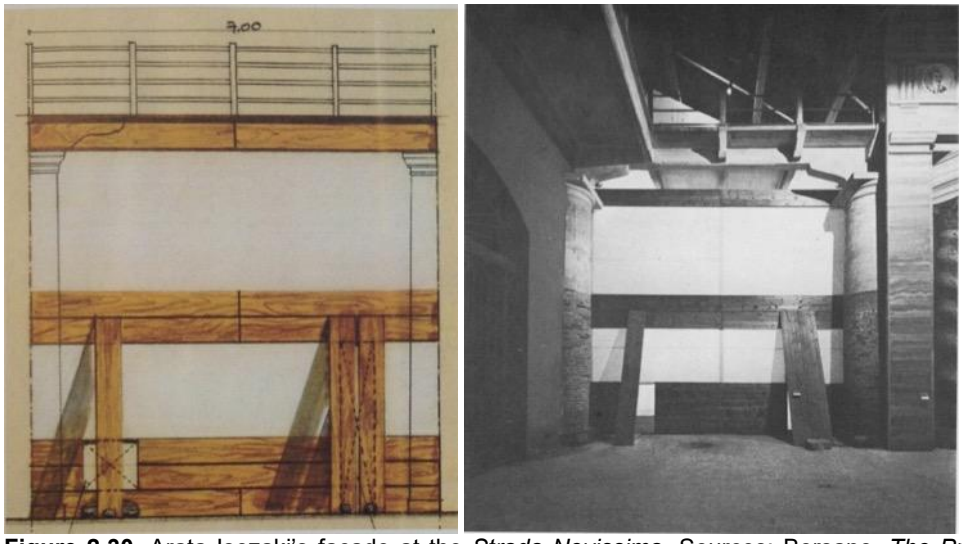

Figure 2.30. Arata Isozaki's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 45 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

[128] Peter Davey, "Postmodern in Venice," *Architectural Review* CLXVIII (1980): 132.

[129] Charles Jencks, "Counter-Reformation: Reflections on the 1980 Venice Biennale," *Architectural Design* 52 (1982): 5.

[130] Aaron Levy and William Menking, ed. *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture* (London: Architectural Association, 2010), 47.

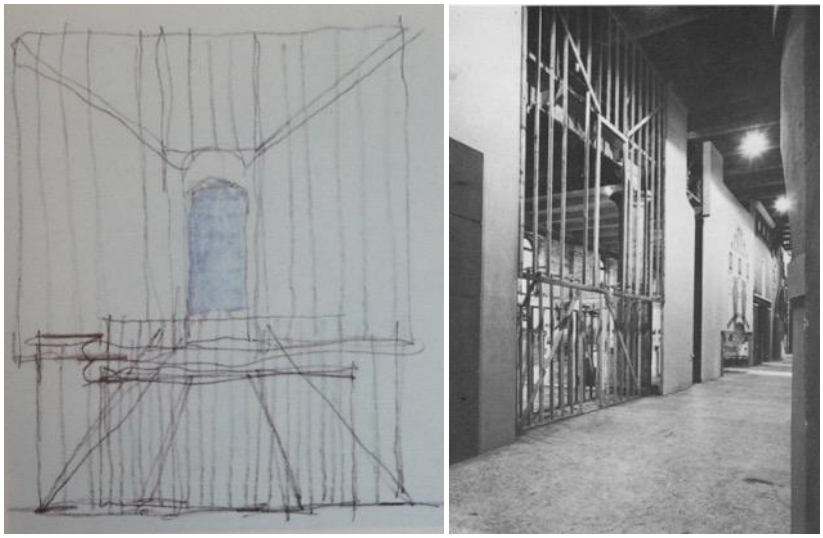

Figure 2.31. Frank O. Gehry's façade at the *Strada Novissima*. Sources: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 41 and https://plusacne.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/strada-novissima/

Thus years later, Portoghesi acknowledged Gehry's contribution as a critical one, dealing with the past through a more essential understanding of tradition rather than by imitating and quoting historical forms. In his recent book *The Story of Postmodernism*, Jencks also hailed Gehry's participation as significant in its representation of the pluralism of approaches, especially in dealing with his main concern: communication in architecture.[131] Indeed, Gehry's contribution was one of the most critical responses to the theme "the presence of the past", seeing it not as a problem of form or language, but as a concern for context and a specific way of "doing architecture" in a particular place and time. Rather than historical periodization and styles, he was interested in construction techniques that were informed by local materials and structural systems. In this regard, Gehry cultivated both a tradition of modernity by emphasizing and exposing the structural and constructional technique of the façade, and an understanding of contextualism by referring to tradition, which carried the past to the present through a continuation of the disciplinary praxis rather than reviving certain historical forms and styles.

The End of the Beginning

In the end, *Strada Novissima* became known as one of the largest shows of postmodern architecture, although Portoghesi, as the director, consciously avoided using the term in the title of the Biennale. In this respect, Portoghesi was not happy with the branding of the Biennale as an exhibition of postmodern architecture. In a recent book titled *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture*, Portoghesi said: "The fact that

[131] Charles Jencks, *The Story of Postmodernism: Five Decades of the Ironic, Iconic, and Critical in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2011), 75.

my exhibition was in a certain sense connected to postmodernism has led it to me misinterpreted. The idea of postmodernism, in relation to the exhibition, was generated by Charles Jencks...".[132] The way the Biennale is labelled and perceived by both professionals and the public has remained as one of the main discussion topic among its organisers. Immediately after the Biennale, Jencks argued:

> By the same token he [an historian of the year 2000] might look at the entries to the 1980 Biennale and see them as comprising only one part of the p-m movement – the historicist part. Naturally Paolo Portoghesi and the committee (Scully, Norberg-Schulz, myself etc.) favoured those who conformed with Portoghesi's Biennale title "The Presence of the Past" – and his concerns (for a "lost language of architecture") … A preference for historicism overcame a preference for communication in general.[133]

Here, Jencks criticises the fact that the Biennale conveyed a message that postmodernism was historicism, and complained about the selection of the 20 architects chosen to exhibit at *Strada Novissima,* and Stern's patronage in deciding upon the American architects and Portoghesi's preference for European historicists. For him, the main goal of postmodernism was to heighten communication through association. Léa-Catherine Szacka wrote that this opposition between historicism and communication was the basic debate of the Biennale, and that this did not truly take place during the preparations for the event.[134]

On the opening of the Biennale, Portoghesi stated, "I believe an exhibition must create space for a debate",[135] and indeed *Strada Novissima* can be said to have done just that. *Domus* journal dedicated much space to the Biennale and the *Strada Novissima* exhibition in its October 1980 issue, in which Marco Dezzi Bardeschi made a harsh criticism of the return to the past, and the commoditization of the architectural experience as an object of market capitalism. He stated: "Forward, therefore, all together forward to the past, in the name of the architecture of Sensual Pleasure! Our aim is an architecture for every mood and for every season."[136] In this regard, what we observe today as authentic architecture, nostalgic place making, imitation and copy, have been somehow proclaimed in international architectural culture through this eye-catching show. The same issue also contained a short interview with Kenneth Frampton, who shared Bardeschi's view, "The term postmodernism is ideological and its coinage as a slogan by Jencks and others surely has the aim of reducing culture to consumerism."[137] In 1982, *Architectural Design* published a special issue on the 1980 Biennale that contained a conversation between Bruno Zevi and Paolo Portoghesi in which Zevi expressed his hatred for Postmodernism as being a big pastiche. He stated, "I don't

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[132] Levy and Menking, *Architecture on Display*, 38.

[133] Charles Jencks, "The Presence of the Past," *Domus* 610 (1980): 9.

[134] Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Historicism versus Communication: The Basic Debate of the 1980 Biennale," *Architectural Design* 81/5 (2011): 98-105.

[135] "Venice Biennale: Discussion," *Architectural Design* 52 (1982): 9.

[136] Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, *Domus* 610 (1980): 17.

[137] Kenneth Frampton, *Domus* 610 (1980): 26.

believe the problems of contemporary civilisation can be resolved by a capricious and mechanical montage of elements pulled out of history, as Post-Modernism would suggest."[138] In the same issue, Vittorio Gregotti's open letter to Leon Krier was published in which he wrote, "In substance, everything rests on a very weak theoretical basis and a general aesthetic snobbism."[139]

Charles Jencks also published an article in the issue with the title "Counter-Reformation: Reflections on the 1980 Venice Biennale." Referring to the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart, he argued that "The Reformation of 1927 had been overtaken by the Counter-Reformation of 1980."[140] *Strada Novissima,* with its scenographic décor-like façades resurrecting past forms, countered the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in which variations of *white boxes* designed by Modernist architects were on display. Accordingly, regardless of the different positions in the historicism versus communication discussion, the Biennale represented in its unity the governing paradigm of 1980s postmodern architectural discourse – understanding architecture as language with a formal vocabulary of past forms. Despite the plurality of approaches – the straight revivalism and double-coded eclecticism of American architects, the theoretically substantiated pre-modern approaches of European neo-rationalists and the architects that adopted neo-vernacular references – almost all the façades (with a notable exception of Gehry) had one thing in common: a use of past forms. Peter Davey, the editor of Architectural Review, wrote in September 1980: "The main street is more a celebration of Neo-Neo-Classicism than a general review of a generation in rebellion against machine worship and collectivism," and in this regard, the counter-reformation can be said to have been realised only on the basis of vocabulary.[141] *Strada Novissima* was perhaps an attempt to erase Le Corbusier's big red X crossing the orders of Classical architecture in his drawing "Ceci n'est pas l'architecture" (This is not architecture). **(Figure 2.32)**

The First Venice Architecture Biennale was not the end of architecture, but it was "the end of the beginning"[142] that had started in the early 1950s when various perspectives on context were offered to heal the ill effects of orthodox modern architecture within the tradition of modernity. In an attempt to widen the purist language of Modern Architecture, the Biennale in fact narrowed the understanding of context by highlighting the syntactic context of the discipline. Later, some of the participants in the Biennale referred back to the notion of context as a more important contribution of postmodern architecture than pastiche, irony, quotation, imitation, etc. In his book *After Modern Architecture,* published three years after the

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[138] "Is Post-Modern Architecture Serious? Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi in Conversation," *Architectural Design* 52, (1982): 20.

[139] Vittorio Gregotti, "An Open Letter to Leon Krier Regarding the Venice Biennale," *Architectural Design* 52, (1982): 24.

[140] Jencks, "Counter-Reformation," 4.

[141] Davey, "Postmodern in Venice," 133.

[142] Davey, "Postmodern in Venice," 134.

Biennale, Portoghesi stated, “Post-Modern architecture upholds the necessity of interaction between historical memories and new traditions, and above all the ‘recontextualisation’ of architecture, the establishment of a precise relationship, or a dialectical nature, between new buildings and the environment which sustains it.”[143] Likewise, as stated recently by Robert Stern, “one of the great important lessons of Post-Modernism is the building in its context”,[144] while in a recent article, Charles Jencks stated:

> Over the last 40 years, the architectural concept of contextualism, borrowed from literature, has missed an important distinction within Post-Modern practice. For many commentators and Prince Charles it has come to mean being in keeping with the surrounding neighbourhood, and thus is used by planning boards to enforce conformity. Why Post-Modernists allowed the co-option of one of their better ideas, and did not protest or explain more clearly what they were about, remains a mystery.[145]

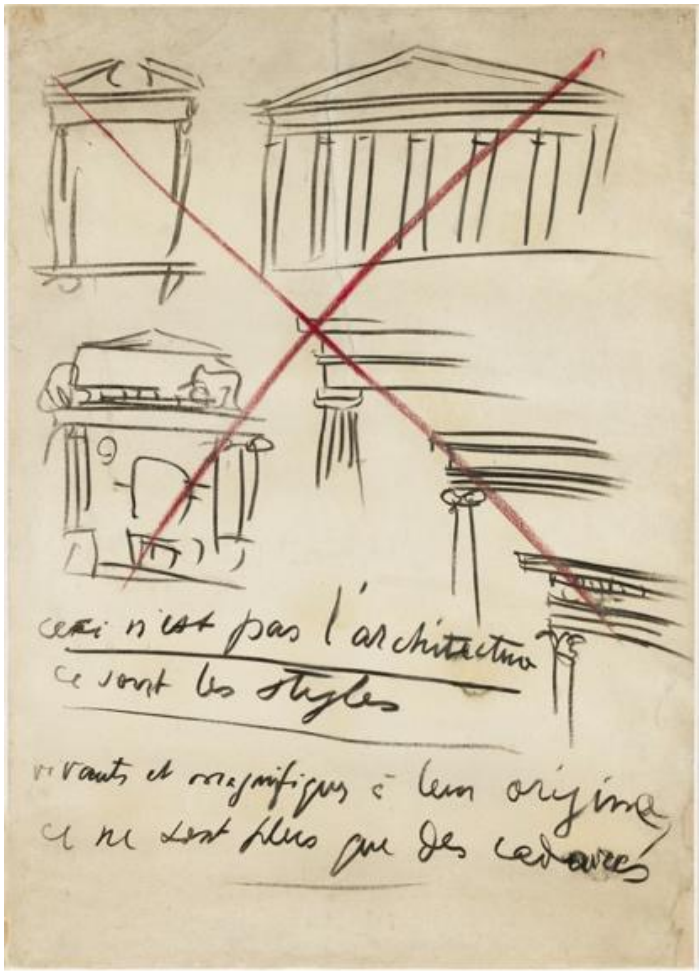

Figure 2.32. Le Corbusier’s “Ceci n'est pas l'architecture" drawing, 1929 © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / FLC.

In fact, it is no mystery why postmodernists allowed the term context to be co-opted when the First Venice Architecture Biennale is analysed. “The Presence of the Past” equated context

[143] Paolo Portoghesi, *After Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983).

[144] Jayne Merkel, “Not So Radical: An American Perspective,” *Architectural Design* 81/5 (2011): 129.

[145] Charles Jencks, “Contextual Counterpoint,” *Architectural Design* 81/5 (2011): 62.

with the formal repertoire of the discipline of architecture, and so reduced the discussion of context to one of a problem of mere language. This is a very limited definition when the multiple perspectives offered by its protagonists in the preceding decades are put to a critical examination. The discussion of context was later dominated by traditionalists and conservatives who argued for conformity and visual compatibility with surrounding built environments. In other words, “the context debate” of the 1950s and 1960s was overtaken by the postmodern historicism and eclecticism discussion of the late 1970s that reached a peak at the First Venice Architecture Biennale, and was instrumentalised for the consolidation of traditionally built harmonious urban environments in the 1980s. As a result of these restrictive and blinkered definitions, the notion of context has been lost from critical architectural discourse ever since, and in order to reclaim context as a critical notion today, the three chapters will that follow will offer an archaeology of the debate in a reverse chronological order from the 1980 First Venice Architecture Biennale to the 1950s in order to uncover its erased, abandoned and forgotten dimensions.

3. From Place to Memory: "Context" in the Works of Aldo Rossi

Teatro del Mondo and the Entrance Gate of The First Venice Architecture Biennale

Figure 3.1. Aldo Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo* at the First Venice Architecture Biennale. Source: http://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/foto-e-video/2010/02/03/fotogalleria/il-teatro-del-mondo-l-utopia-di-rossi-in-mostra-a-venezia-1.1037019#4

"No other work of Rossi's revealed the power of his imagination so much as the *Teatro del Mondo* of 1980", wrote Kurt W. Forster in the catalogue of the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1990, when Aldo Rossi was the recipient.[146] Rossi had designed this floating theatre in 1979 for the exhibition "Venezia e lo spazio scenico" after being appointed by Paolo Portoghesi, the director of the first Venice Architecture Biennale, and the theatre was officially opened on 11 November, 1979. The venue was used for the Theatre Sector of the Venice Biennale, which was organised with the "Floating Theatres of the Carnivals of Eighteenth-century Venice." The design of the theatre brought together four simple forms: a central cube, with seating for around 250 people and with a stage located at the centre; two rectangular cuboids enclosing the stairs leading to the galleries on the upper floors, attached to the two sides of the central cube; an octagonal prism located above the central cube; and an octagonal pyramidal roof on top.[147] **(Figure 3.1)** The building was based on a steel pipe structure with the exterior and interior covered with yellow timber cladding, and the roof was made from zinc. A light blue colour was applied to the doors, window frames, the upper edge of the central cube and the octagonal prism, having the appearance of very thick two-dimensional cornices. The square base was 9.5 m wide and the height of the theatre was around 25 m. It was anchored at

[146] Kurt W. Forster, "Aldo Rossi's Architecture of Recollection: The Silence of Things Repeated or Stated for Eternity," in *The Pritzker Architecture Prize, 1990: Presented to Aldo Rossi*, ed. Jensen & Walker (Los Angeles: Jensen & Walker, 1990), unpaginated.

[147] For a brief overview of Rossi's modifications of the plan of *Teatro del Mondo* during the design phase, see: Francesco Dal Co, "Now This is Lost: The Theatre of the World by Aldo Rossi at the Venice Biennale," *Lotus International* 25 (1979): 66–70.

Punta della Dogana in Venice during the Biennale, but was taken across the Adriatic Sea after 10 August, 1980 and was moored in Dubrovnik for the Dubrovnik Theatre Festival.

Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo* was launched before any discussion of the *Strada Novissima*, the principal exhibition of the first Venice Architecture Biennale of 1980,[148] and Rossi was later invited to contribute to the Biennale's main exhibition at the Corderie dell'Arsenale, along with 20 other well-known architects, being asked to design a façade that would form part of an interior street. As he would state in a later interview, Rossi did not want to take part in *Strada Novissima* due to the competition created within the exhibition,[149] but agreed to design the main Entrance Gate outside that would lead visitors towards the entrance of the Corderie building. **(Figure 3.2)** His design resembled the entrance gates found within the defensive city walls of medieval cities, and had a certain unity with the architecture of the *Teatro del Mondo* in terms of its abstract formal composition and materials. The Gate was composed of four door-like intervals separated by the piers of the three pointed towers, and had the same material combination as the Theatre, with a yellow timber finish and zinc. In fact, these two projects would never be visible together, although the Gate complemented the *Teatro del Mondo* conceptually and compositionally, and worked as a mediating element linking the entrance of the architectural exhibition with the entrance of the city where the Theatre was anchored. In this regard, in many of Rossi's later drawings, *Teatro del Mondo* and the Entrance Gate of the 1980 First Venice Architecture Biennale appeared together as part of the same composition, although they could never be perceived as such.[150] **(Figure 3.3)**

Figure 3.2. Aldo Rossi's Entrance Gate at the First Venice Architecture Biennale. Source: http://mestreech.eu/Kunst/Rossi-4.jpg

[148] See Chapter II.

[149] Antonio De Bonis, "AD Interview: Aldo Rossi and Paolo Portoghesi," *Architectural Design* 52 (1982): 16.

[150] Léa-Catherine Szacka argued that Rossi designed a third project for the Biennale, a bridge, although it was never built. According to Szacka, this project was designed before the Entrance Gate project and just few months after the *Teatro del Mondo* was built. Architect Francesco Cellini, in his interview with Szacka, stated that they wanted to build the bridge on the Rio Della Tana to provide a public access to the Arsenale but then they cancelled the project and decided to use the courtyard for the entrances. See: Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale" (PhD diss., University College London, 2012).

Figure 3.3. Aldo Rossi's "Venezia Analoga" drawing from 1989 showing the *Teatro del Mondo* and the Entrance Gate designed for the First Venice Architecture Biennale. Source: Morris Adjmi and Giovanni Bertolotto, *Aldo Rossi: Drawings and Paintings*, 150.

In an interview with *Architectural Design* in 1982, speaking about the First Venice Architecture Biennale, Aldo Rossi said: "The theme of the exhibition, decided upon by Paolo Portoghesi, represents what we have been looking for many years; I remember my articles in *Casabella Continuità* and articles by many others, a letter from Portoghesi to Ernesto Rogers, in support of our fight. In short, the 'presence' of the past is a key factor in everything we did in opposition to the Modern Movement."[151] Although Rossi argued that his architectural practice in the 1980s was a continuation of his early career in the 1950s, the evolution of his architectural works suggests some major shifts and changes. Charles Jencks, in his article "Counter-Reformation: Reflections on the 1980 Venice Biennale", published in the same 1982 issue of *Architectural Design,* stated: "The Reformation of 1927 [exhibition of Stuttgart] had been overtaken by the Counter-Reformation of 1980, rationalism had been swallowed by Post-Modernism, Rossi gave up eschatology and designed a cheerful, bouncing theatre, and there was peace and much celebration in the land."[152] Hence, *Teatro del Mondo* and the Entrance Gate signified how Rossi's early "mute" platonic forms – expressing his neo-rationalist approach in the 1950s and 1960s – had transformed into "cheerful" and "bouncing" architectural elements, which became representative for "counter-reformation" together with the *Strada Novissima* exhibition.

[151] De Bonis, "AD Interview," 13.

[152] Charles Jencks, "Counter-Reformation: Reflections on the 1980 Venice Biennale," *Architectural Design* 52 (1982): 4.

In his *A Scientific Autobiography*, published in 1981,[153] Rossi stated:

> In all of my architecture, I have always been fascinated by the theatre, although I have done only three projects connected with it: the early project for the Teatro Paganini in the Piazza della Pilotta at Parma; the 1979 project for the Little Scientific Theatre; and, more recently, the floating theatre at Venice. This last project is particularly dear to me; it is one for which I have much affection.[154]

Teatro del Mondo, which Rossi "loved very much" (an expression he used in his *A Scientific Autobiography*), was a kind of built paradigm of the ideas discussed in the book. Rossi introduced this book as an extension of the themes that were mostly left out in his first book *L'Architettura della Città*. He wrote on the very first page that: "Written when I was close to thirty, this book [*The Architecture of the City*] seemed definitive to me … Later I clearly saw that the work should have encompassed a more comprehensive set of themes, especially in light of the analogies which intersect all of our actions."[155] A few pages later he confessed to his early architectural theories, saying "I scorned memories, and at the same time, I made use of urban impressions: behind feelings I searched for the fixed laws of a timeless typology."[156] Hence, "the architecture of the city" was overtaken by "the architecture of analogy" that would characterise his later book and the design of the *Teatro del Mondo*.

Rossi defined the idea of analogy as "the realm of probability, of definitions that approximated the object through a kind of cross-referencing".[157] The references in his projects were diverse, coming from personal memories of distinct places, objects and experiences, as well as from the history of architecture. For instance, Rossi introduced his stay in Slawonski Brod after a car accident in 1971 while traveling to Turkey, as an experience, the memory of which later guided the design of his Modena Cemetery project. One of his most obvious cross-references can be found in his exaggerated interpretation of Filarete's column in Venice in his Südliche Friedrichstadt apartments. Rossi mentioned lighthouses, clocks and minarets in İzmir and the Kremlin's tower in Moscow as references, or rather analogies, for his *Teatro del Mondo*.[158] Moreover, some well-known theatre typologies or floating performances and temporary structures also influenced the architecture of *Teatro del Mondo.* **(Figure 3.4)** In this regard, Rossi's theatre was placeless and timeless, not only as an ephemeral moving object, but also

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[153] In 1981, Rossi was also awarded the first prize in the international IBA housing competition for Friedrichsrasse in Berlin, which was one of the first instances enabled him to build projects outside of Italy.

[154] Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1981), 26. Rossi's graduation project at the Politecnico of Milan, which was prepared under the supervision of Professor Piero Portaluppi in 1959, also included a theater design in addition to a cultural centre.

[155] Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography,* 1.

[156] Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography,* 15.

[157] Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography,* 81.

[158] In the book, Rossi mentioned the Green Mosque in Bursa, Turkey, which he saw during his trip in 1971, as a place that stimulated his passion for architecture again for making him feel "on the other side of the spectacle". The influence of this affection of the place as a "theatre of events" can be grasped in Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo*. Surprisingly, the simple octagonal form of the tomb next to this mosque has close affinities with the architecture of the *Teatro del Mondo.* Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography,* 11-12.

due to it being a culmination of histories of different places and times, all of which were simultaneously present in the design of the theatre. In other words, the theatre reflected a selection of Rossi's personal memories in addition to the memory of the discipline of architecture stored in the typologies of the various theatre designs. Anchored at Punta della Dogana, the theatre was designed as a physical gate to the city that was also an imaginative gate to Rossi's world of personal and architectural memories.

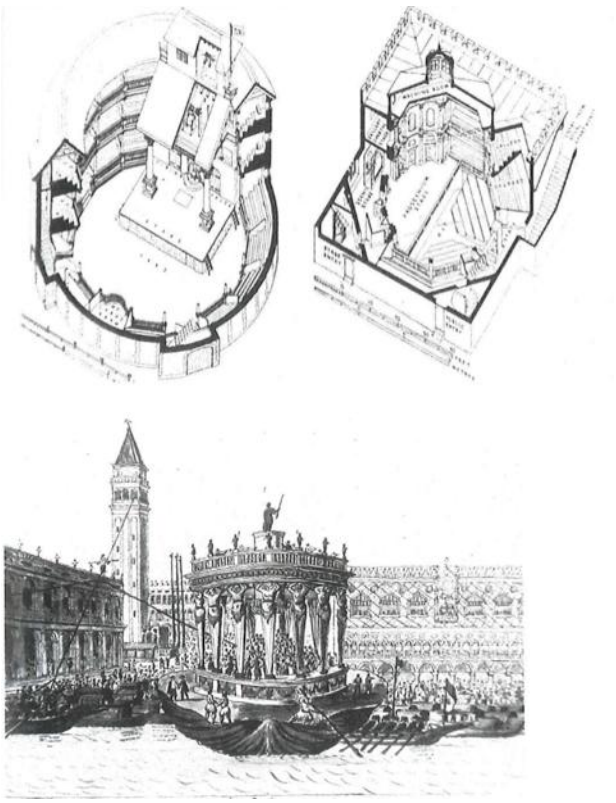

Figure 3.4. Top: Shakespearean theatres, bottom: Giovanni Grevernbrach, floating performance. Source: Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, *Aldo Rossi: Buildings and Projects*, 221.

In short, in Rossi's analogous architecture, he extracted inspiration from a pool of forms that lay in his memory, or to put it into Vincent Scully's terms, from "an ocean of remembered shapes".[159] The shapes, forms and elements were pulled from their original contexts, transformed in terms of scale and size, and brought together in a new composition. In this way, time is not diachronic for Rossi, since elements that belong to any historical moment may be reused in a new design. In analogous architecture, it is only possible to talk about a time of "continuous present". In other words, neither time nor architecture progresses, since there is a use of forms in constant *repetition* – which is a notion that appeared many times in *A Scientific Autobiography.* However, analogous architecture is not only about the synchronicity of time, but also of place. Rossi stated, "Through my own life or craft I have

[159] Vincent Scully, postscript to *A Scientific Autobiography,* by Aldo Rossi (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1981), 116.

partly lost this concept of the fixed place, and at times I superimpose different situations and different times, as my reader has already seen."[160] In this regard, context was not defined as a *specific fixed place* in which a building is located, or as *city*, the architecture of which was argued to be characterised by timeless typologies in Rossi's early writings. Context rather becomes an abstract ideal place that does not exist, but is invented through an analogical composition of remembered forms. Context as imaginarily constructed through the use of architectural elements derived from the architect's own autobiographical works can also be traced in Rossi's *Roma Interrotta* proposal.

Aldo Rossi at *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition

Figure 3.5. *Roma Interrotta* exhibition space. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections* (Milano, Johan & Levi, 2014), 212.

[160] Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography,* 55.

The *Roma Interrotta* (Rome Interrupted) exhibition was organised in 1977 by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte and opened in 1978 in Rome at the Mercato di Traiano. **(Figure 3.5)** The main objective of the exhibition was to search for a more coherent urban development for the city of Rome. The mayor of the city at the time, Carlo Argan, stated, "Rome is an interrupted city because there came a time when it was no longer imagined, and it began to be planned (badly)."[161] Arguing that the planning of Rome had been interrupted since the late 18th century, 12 well-known architects were asked to redesign the 12 plates of the Giambattista Nolli's *Nuova Pianta di Roma* dating to 1748.[162] Nolli's map was significant in that it provided one of the first most precise mappings of the city. Further than that, it showed the city, then the capital of the Papal state, as a coherent organism by representing the public spaces as successive voids, shown in white, while depicting the built mass as an urban *poché,* shown in black. The participants were Piero Sartogo, Costantino Dardi, Antoine Grumbach, James Stirling, Paolo Portoghesi, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Venturi, Colin Rowe, Michael Graves, Robert Krier, Aldo Rossi, and Leon Krier, six of whom would also participate in the First Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980.[163] Similar to the 1980 Venice Biennale, the exhibition opened in one of the city's most significant historical buildings. The entrance of the exhibition enforced a theatrical experience, framed by two large blue curtains that would billow with the help of a fan brought from *Cinecittà,* one of the largest film studios in Rome, the workers of which would later build the facades of *Strada Novissima*. **(Figure 3.6)** A blue cube was located across from the entrance, where Nolli's original map and its interpretation by the 12 invited architects were exhibited. **(Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8)**

Figure 3.6. The installation of the *Cinecittà*'s fan behind the two large blue curtains at the entrance of the *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 209.

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[161] Giulio Carlo Argan, foreword to *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections* (Milano: Johan & Levi, 2014), 23.

[162] For details of the map and the list of projects it presented, see: "The Nolli Map Website," prepared by Jim Tice and Erik Steiner in consultation with Allan Ceen that could be accessed from: http://nolli.uoregon.edu/default.asp

[163] No collaboration or connection between the 12 plates and 12 architects was requested. This was raised as a problem by Alan Chimacoff, who stated in his review essay of the exhibition that "Nonetheless, looking at the array of 12 projects, the apparent absence of communication between adjacent participants is sorely felt. There are juxtapositions so jarring that one wonders how the participants, so many of whom are avowed contextualists, could not have felt the need for communication over the course of the project which ran for more than a year." Alan Chimacoff, "Roma Interrotta Reviewed," *Architectural Design Profiles* 20 (1979): 7.

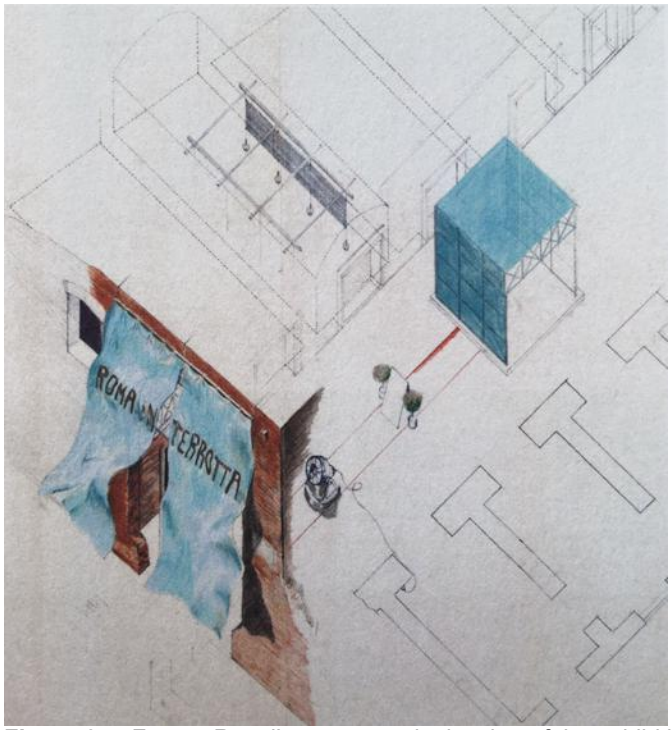

Figure 3.7. Franco Raggi's axonometric drawing of the exhibition area. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 212.

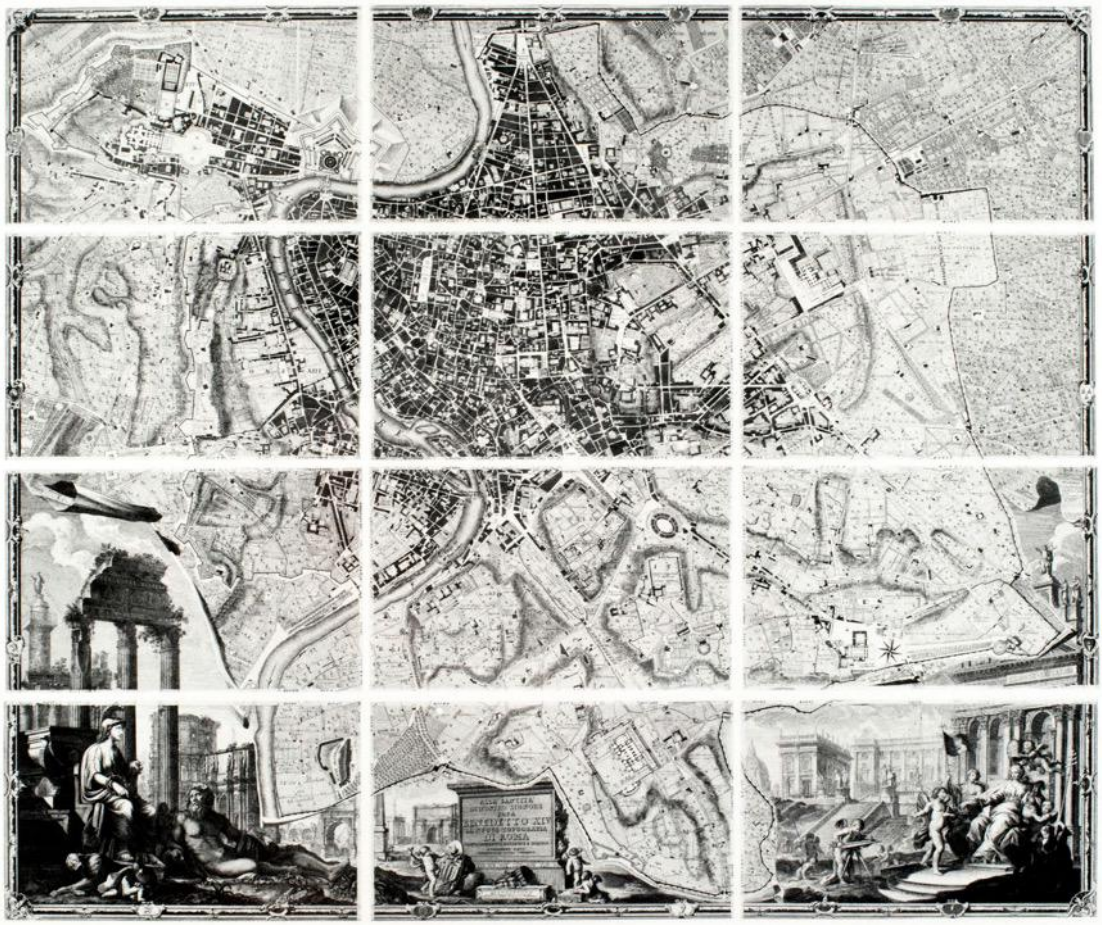

Figure 3.8. Giambattista Nolli's *Nuova Pianta di Roma*, 1748. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 3.

Aldo Rossi was assigned sector XI, which was the centre plate in the bottom row of the Nolli's map. **(Figure 3.9)** Half of this sector shows the part of the city inside the Aurelian walls that contains the Terme Antoniane, the cisterns supplying the Terme Antoniane, and a number of churches, such as SS. Nereo e Achilleo and San Saba. On the part outside the city walls, Nolli had drawn a monumental marble slab with the inscription: "To his holiness Pope Benedict the 14th the new map of Rome is obsequiously offered and dedicated by his humble servant Giambattista Nolli of Como," in front of which was a putti carving of the papal coat-of-arms of Benedetto XIV on the left and two putti with a magnetic compass on the right.[164] Below the compass was another inscription stating, "Measured and drawn at his own expense and published by Giambattista Nolli, surveyor and architect in the year 1748."[165] An architectural scale in the traditional measurement unit of the Roman palm was shown on a pedestal in front of the marble slab. In addition to these elements providing information about the map and its architect, Nolli depicted some historical buildings and ruins in the background, such as the Arco di Settimio Severo, the Colonna di Marco Aurelio, the Portico del Tempio della Concordia and the Obelisco già del Mausoleo di'Augusto. This picturesque drawing outside of the city walls challenged the two-dimensionality of the map by envisioning the city's past in three dimensions.

Figure 3.9. Nolli's map, sector XI. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 186.

[164] Original: "Alla Santità Di Nostro Signore Papa Benedetto XIV La Nuova Topografia Di Roma Ossequiosamente Offerisce E Dedica L'Umilissimo Servo Giambattista Nolli Comasco." English translation from: http://nolli.uoregon.edu/artifact.html

[165] Original: "Misurata delin. ed a proprie spese data in luce da Giambatta Nolli Geoma ed Arch.° l'Anno 1748." English translation from: http://nolli.uoregon.edu/artifact.html

Rossi, together with his team which included Max Basshard, Gianni Braghieri, Arduino Cantafora and Paul Katzberger, proposed a project that simply aimed to modernise the old baths in their sector, namely the Terme Antoniane, with modern heating and cooling systems and support its function with a fountain, tea-house, diving board, water house, etc. **(Figure 3.10)** In this regard, Rossi's intervention within the city walls was limited to the restoration of the bath and its immediate surroundings. As Rossi himself claimed, "The project does not refer to any hypothetical alternative to urban growth, nor is it affected by relationships to the city, in particular to the city of Rome or to *Roma Interrotta.*"[166] In his proposal, Rossi replaced Nolli's picturesque drawing and the inscriptions outside the city walls with his own projects, which were re-used for the restoration of the Terme Antoniane. In this regard, his intervention differed completely from the approaches that proposed an urban extension in their sector based on the old city fabric of Rome (e.g. Colin Rowe's proposal). Rather than aiming to speculate over an imaginative urban growth through a collage of his own autobiographical works (as, for instance, James Stirling did), Rossi used examples from his previous projects to restore the existing establishment.[167]

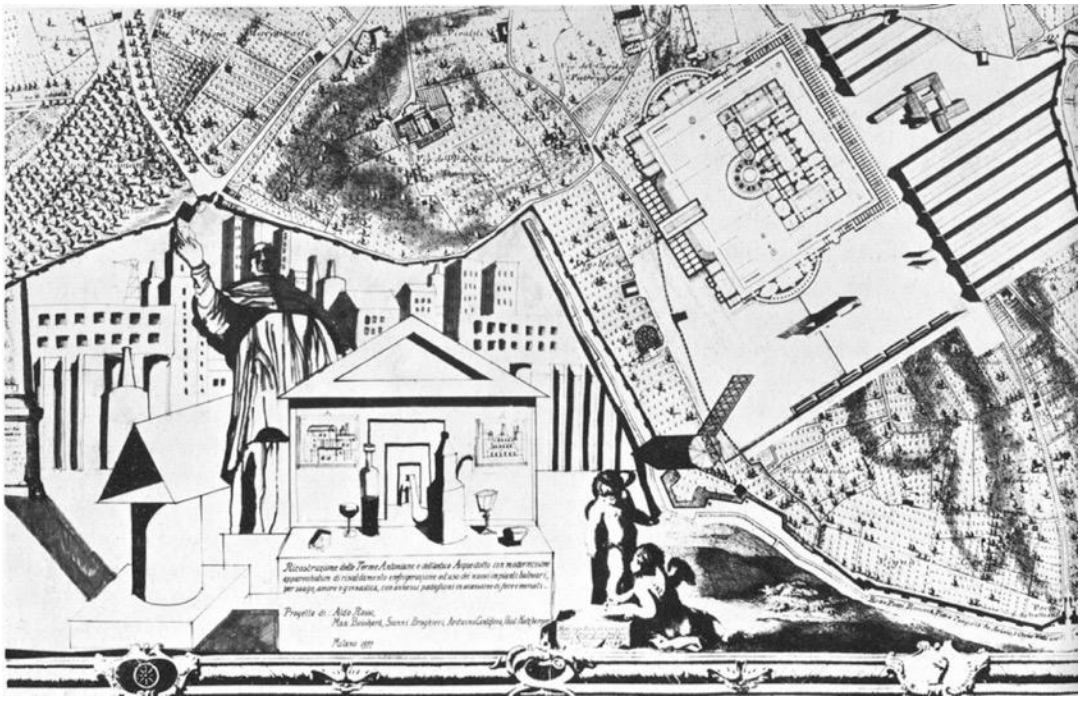

Figure 3.10. Aldo Rossi's proposal for the sector XI for the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 187.

[166] Aldo Rossi, in *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections* (Milano: Johan & Levi, 2014), 185.

[167] For a detailed interpretation of Colin Rowe's and James Stirling's proposal for the Roma Interrotta exhibition, see Chapter V.

Rossi's superimposed drawing included the statue of San Carlone di Arona, a section from Rossi's Housing at Gallaratese in Milan, his monument in memory of the Partisans in Segrate and an altered version of his Little Scientific Theatre, with the inscription: "Rebuilding the Antoninian Baths and ancient aqueduct with modern heating and cooling systems providing new bathing facilities dedicated to leisure, love and gymnastics, including annexed pavilions for use as eventual fair grounds and market places. Project by Aldo Rossi, Max Basshard, Gianni Braghieri, Arduino Cantafora and Paul Katzberger. Milan, 1977."[168] While Nolli's drawn elements from the city's architectural past aimed to represent the collective history of Rome, Rossi's collage was autobiographical, presenting architectural fragments from his previous personal works. Rossi proposed to heal the existing context by superposing over it an imaginary context that was a composition of architectural projects chosen from the architect's own autobiographical works and memories. Accordingly, Rossi's contextual gesture was to keep and renovate the old existing baths, with the city as context being of no interest. As Rossi suggested, "If this project were to have a motto, it would surely be: *ceci n'est pas une ville*! (this is not a city!)," referring to the phrase used by Manfredo Tafuri when criticizing Rossi's Analogous City plate in an article that also carried the phrase as its title.[169]

La Città Analoga

Aldo Rossi, together with Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart, prepared the *La Città Analoga* (The Analogous City) plate for the *Europa-America: Centro Storico-Suburbio* exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 1976. **(Figure 3.11)** This plate neither represented nor proposed a plan for a real city, and so was not about a "fixed place" but rather an imaginary expression of what the conception of a city could be in one's mind. The plate was made up of a collage of fragments – or better to say, quotations – from around 40 projects dating back to the 15th century BC up to the present day.[170] Although the main outline of the composition was thoroughly planned, the editing and juxtaposition of most of the fragments were rather arbitrary. The composition of the panel was from the perspective of one approaching the analogous city from the sea. Rossi, Braghieri, Reichlin and Reinhart's project of a door and a bridge in the walls of Bellinzona here became the gate of the analogous city. The fragments behind this gate and the city wall, namely Piranesi's Prison V,

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[168] Original: "Ricostruzione delle Terme Antoniane e dell'antico acquedotto con modernissime apparecchiature di riscaldamento e refrigerazione ad uso dei nuovi impianti balneari per svago, amore e ginnastica, con annessi padiglioni in occasione di fiere e mercati. Progetto di: Aldo Rossi, Max Basshard, Gianni Braghieri, Arduino Cantafora, Paul Katzberger. Milano, 1977." Translated by the author.

[169] Rossi, *Roma Interrotta,* 185.

[170] As part of the exhibition "Aldo Rossi – The Window of the Poet" at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht, 2015, Archizoom decomposed the Analogous City panel and presented the list of the projects and their locations on the map, relying on the studies of Dario Rodighiero, a PhD candidate at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. I take this study as base of my subsequent interpretations of the panel. Dario Rodighiero's work can be accessed from: https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/209326/files/Rodighiero%202015%20The%20Analogous%20City%20The%20Map.pdf

Rossi's Villa in Ticino and Gallaratese Housing in Milan, and the elevation of Corippo after the interventions of Luigi Snozzi and Henk Block, were seen mostly in elevation and perspective, as if the city sat on the slopes of a hill, as if captured from the water.

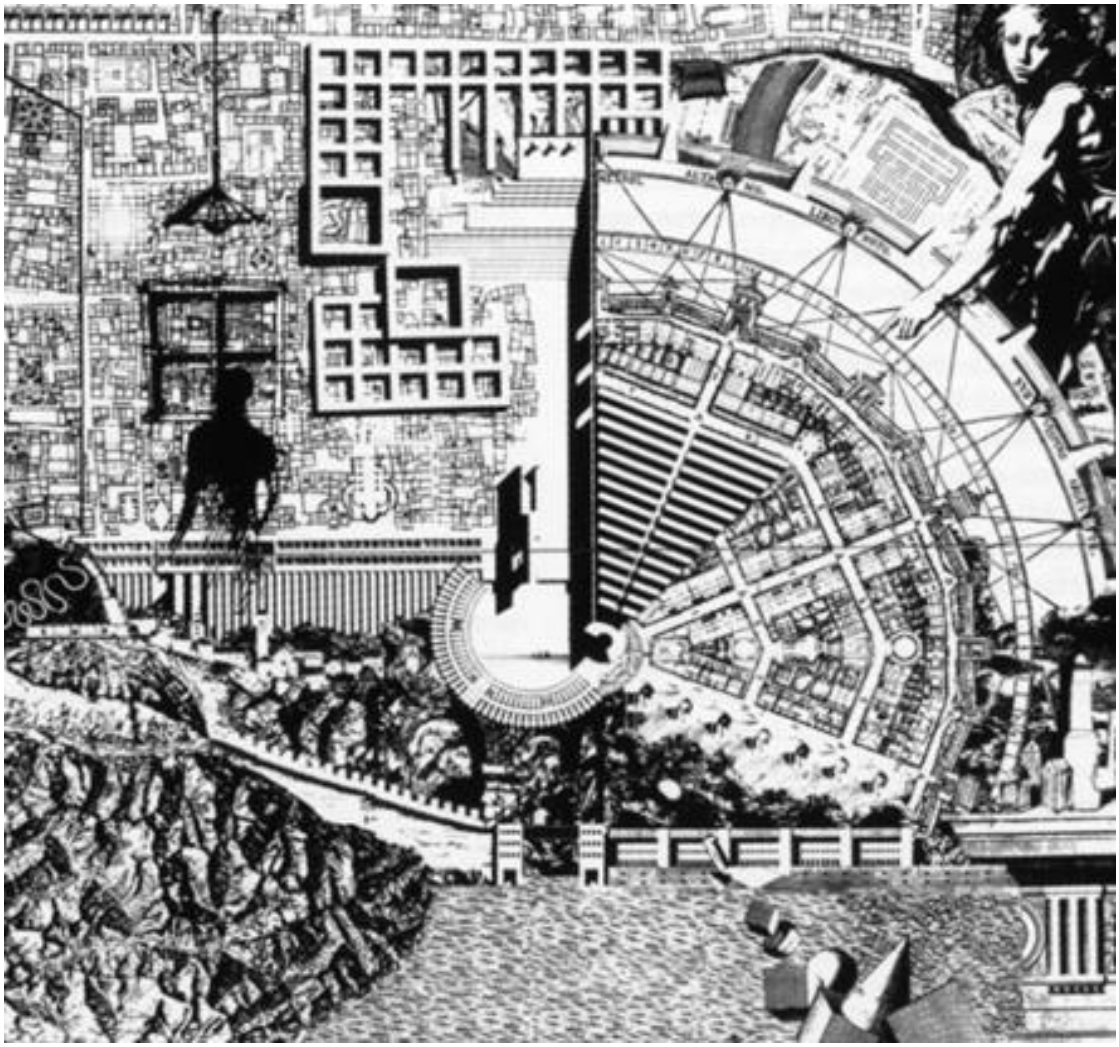

Figure 3.11. Aldo Rossi's *La Città Analoga Drawing* (1976). Source: Aldo Rossi, "The Analogous City: Panel," *Lotus International* 13 (1976): 4.

Behind this image of the city, one enters the world of imagination, as was emphasised by placing Galileo Galilei's drawing of the Pleiades constellation at the centre of the composition. The upper half of the plate depicted a juxtaposition of plans and maps representing – like a palimpsest – the stratification of architectural references both in this imaginary city's as well as Rossi's *consisting*. Gianfranco Caniggia's Como map was used as the base of the top left quarter of the plate, and plans of architectural projects from different periods were superimposed on the map that included Knossos Palace in Crete, Bouleuterion in Mileto, Bayezid II Külliye in Edirne, Donato Bramante's Tempietto of San Pietro in Montorio in Roma, Michelangelo's Laurentian Library in Firenze, Andreo Palladio's Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza,

Francesco Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome, Giuseppe Terragni's Project for the Danteum, and Le Corbusier's the Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp (the last two being the only two modernist references). The plans of these projects were injected into the city map of Como in very small sizes, and therefore can barely be seen, and four of Rossi's own projects were also included in this top left quarter of the panel: the single-family houses in Broni, located in the corner; the Spazio Chiuso drawing, with its window facing the plan of Knossos Palace (the most ancient reference in the plate from the 15th–16th century BC), located at the centre; the plan of San Rocco housing unit; and the square and monuments to the partisans in Segrate located on the right. Rossi's own projects can be more easily identified due to their sizes and shades.

The figure of David from Tanzio da Varallo's "David with the Head of Goliath" drawing was located in the top right corner of the plate with a finger pointing to the centre of the canvas, and Giovanni Battista Caporali's *Drawing of Vitruvius' City* was located between the centre of the plate and the figure of David, juxtaposed with the plans of the Church of Santa Costanza in Roma, the Chapter House in York Minister in York, the Spanish Steps in Roma, Frauenkirche in Dresden, and Rossi and Braghieri's Cemetery of San Cataldo in Modena. Again, while the historical projects were injected into the city fabric in Caporali's map, Rossi's own project can be more clearly identified, juxtaposing a different order on the map. A small portion of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Plan of the Campus Martius in Roma was sited between the figure of David and Caporali's map, while Andrea Palladio's drawing of a Doric column was located on the bottom right corner of the plate, topped by Rossi's Beach Huts and *Moka Coffee Maker*. Augustin-Charles d'Aviler's drawing of a primary geometric figure was located next to the Doric column, as if emphasizing the divine proportions and the simple forms in the timeless sources of the architecture of the city. The bottom left corner of the map represents a more natural setting outside the city walls of the analogous city, where a ground floor map of the village of Brontallo was superimposed on Dufour's topographic map of Switzerland.

As the list of the projects show, Rossi's references were diverse, embodying both realised and conceptual works from different times and places, and with different functions and styles. All the architectural fragments were removed from their original contexts and brought together in different scales. The analogous city was thus a collage of elements derived from Rossi's personal memory as well as from the history of the discipline of architecture. In this regard, the project represented Rossi's own autonomous artistic creativity within the disciplinary context, without addressing real conditions of any particular city. In fact, Rossi contextualised this plate with an accompanying text when it was published in *Lotus International* journal in 1976. The theme of the issue was "urban renewal", and the first article was Rossi's "The Analogous City: Panel."[171] Rossi began by commenting on the current approaches to the

[171] *Lotus International*'s 13th issue presented an extensive array of materials dealing with urban renewal by bringing

renewal of historical centres, stating that the proposals "belong for the most part to government officials or economists or politicians on the one hand, and to town council or state officers (Council for Public Monuments) on the other".[172] He argued that artists and technicians should develop alternative approaches to the urban growth, since the existing totalistic urban *models* and redevelopments based on a re-articulation of functions are devoid of any imagination for the future of the cities. Against this background, he proposed the analogous city as an alternative, claiming that a city will be beautiful as long as its buildings and places do not signify only themselves, but develop different meanings by evoking associations through analogies.[173] Rossi concluded the article by saying: "Between past and present, reality and imagination, the analogous city is perhaps simply the city to be designed day by day, tackling problems and overcoming them, with a reasonable certainty that things will ultimately be better."[174]

However, Rossi's "The Analogous City" panel failed to come up with a design model that dealt with the current problems of the built environment, which were basically concentrated on the renewal of the historical city centres in Europe and their relationship with the over-expanding suburbs. It is rather easy to represent memory by merging history with geography within the realm of a drawing, but how can this be attained when designing a real project? Although Rossi claimed that his imagination stemmed from memory as well as from reality, his proposal was indeed a suspension of reality. Context was no longer a real city, as was introduced in Rossi's early writings, but an imaginary one in which space and time did not meet. It was no surprise that one of the sharpest critiques of Rossi's "The Analogous City" came from Manfredo Tafuri in the same issue of *Lotus* journal, immediately after Rossi's text on the plate. In his article entitled "Ceci N'est Pas une Ville," which was alluding to René Magritte's "Ceci N'est Pas une Pipe" drawing and Foucault's article of the same name that dealt with it, Tafuri wrote:

> Rossi had (for that matter) already accustomed us to assess as formal machines autonomous drawings based upon the combinatory manipulation of real and ideal places. Is this an analogical thought as an archaic thought expressible only through dehistoricised images?
> For Rossi's "analogous city", too, no "place" exists. Below the composition might well be written, in a childish hand, the words: "*ceci n'est pas une ville*".[175]

"The analogous city" is not a city, according to Tafuri, in that it searches for but cannot attain, with its decontextualised juxtaposition of architectural elements.

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together design proposals from recent symposiums and competitions, as well as critical essays written by such well-known scholars as Bernardo Secchi's "The New Quality of the Question of Historic Centres", Christian Norberg-Schulz's "Genius Loci" and André Corboz's "Old Buildings and Modern Functions"; Gottfried Böhm, Vittorio Gregotti, Charles W. Moore, Alison Smithson, and Oswald M. Ungers' proposals for the renewal of Berlin's Kreuzberg area; and some of the design entries at the first Paris la Villette Competition in 1976.

[172] Aldo Rossi, "The Analogous City: Panel," *Lotus International* 13 (1976): 5.

[173] Rossi, "The Analogous City," 6.

[174] Rossi, "The Analogous City," 8.

[175] Manfredo Tafuri, "Ceci N'est Pas une Ville," *Lotus International* 13 (1976): 13.

The main source of reference for Rossi's *Analogous City* was Giovanni Antonio Canal's (known as Canaletto) "Capriccio with Palladian Buildings" painting, the influence of which was more visible in the previous *La Città Analoga* drawing prepared by Rossi's student Arduino Cantafora, presented at the XV Milan Triennale in 1973. **(Figure 3.12)** Rossi was the principal curator of the XV Milan Triennale, the theme of which was *Architettura Razionale* (Rational Architecture), presenting the thesis of *La Tendenza*.[176] Cantafora's 7 m x 2 m oil painting of the analogous city was an imaginary composition of autonomous architectural objects that was reminiscent of Colin Rowe's theory of *Collage City*, although different from it in depicting buildings as *freestanding objects* rather than *space-definers*.[177] **(Figure 3.13)** In other words, Rossi's concern was architectural form rather than urban space, as the omission of plans or maps from the drawing confirms. Rossi's monument to the partisans in Segrate was located at the centre of the drawing, with Étienne-Louis Boullée's Truncated Cone-Shaped Tower at the end of the central axis and Ludwig Hilberseimer's design for Friedrichstrasse in Berlin located on either side. The projects depicted on the right of the axis included Adolf Loos' Haus am Michaelerplatz in Vienna, Rossi's Gallaratese housing in Milan, Alessandro Antonelli's Mole in Turin and the Pantheon in Rome, while on the left of the central axis were depicted Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como, Pyramid of Cestius in Rome, Giovanni Antonio Antolini's Foro Bonaparte in Milan and Peter Behrens's turbine factory in Berlin.

Figure 3.12. Giovanni Antonio Canal's (Canaletto) "Capriccio with Palladian Buildings" painting, 1755.

[176] For a more detailed information about the catalogue of the XV Milan Triennale and Rossi's exhibition text, see: Angelika Schnell, "The Socialist Perspective of the XV Triennale di Milano: Hans Schmidt's Influence on Aldo Rossi," *Candide Journal for Architectural Knowledge* 2 (2010): 33–72.

[177] For Rowe's theory of *Collage City*, see Chapter V.

Figure 3.13. Arduino Cantafora's *La Città Analoga* drawing, 1973. Source: http://urban-networks.blogspot.nl/2015/08/revoluciones-urbanas-en-la-decada-de_15.html

Cantafora's drawing, in which built and unbuilt projects were decontextualised and juxtaposed, similar to Canaletto's imaginary Venice painting, implied the definition of "rational architecture" as the catalogue of timeless de-historicised detached urban types. As Massimo Scolari elaborated in his essay written for the XV Milan Triennale, "history understood as the *history of types* and of constitutive elements" and "the point of transfer between history and planning can be summarised in the conception of type as architectural principle, and that invention in design can be practiced from a perspective indifferent to functions and references of time and place – that is, through *analogies*".[178] In this regard, the architecture of the city and its history is not characterised by the specificity of time and place, but defined through cross-referential analogies. In the end, buildings were dissociated from their specific places and times, and became emptied signs, as argued by Tafuri.[179] Here, context was implied or conceptualised as an imaginary yet realistic scene making, and so the understanding of context as city and *locus* (the singularity of place or art of place) were overshadowed by inventing imaginary contexts that were represented through the scenography of remembrances. The realities of context, which played a substantial role in Rossi's early writings and teachings, were overtaken by the memories of the architect, with the traces and the motivations behind this transition observable in the years around 1968 when major social and cultural changes in Italy were having a direct effect on Rossi's personal and academic life.

Intermezzo: '68 Movement and the Discipline of Architecture

[178] Massimo Scolari, "The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde," in *Architectural Theory since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 142–143.

[179] Manfredo Tafuri, *"L'Architecture dans le Boudoir:* The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," in *Architectural Theory since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 148–173.

Rafael Moneo, in his book *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects,* in which, among others, he presented and interpreted Rossi's projects from 1961 up until 1993, said: "In sum, in examining the architectural work of Rossi, we will witness a shift from knowledge to feeling."[180] According to Moneo, this shift was triggered by Rossi's trip to America in 1976, which, he claimed, "constituted a fall on the road to Damascus because, in a way, it was this trip that dismounted him from his scientific zeal and led him to realise that one could only work with images."[181] In fact, the instances in the shift from the architecture of the city to analogous city – from the city embodying collective memory to the city expressing personal memory, or from knowledge to feeling, as Moneo puts it, can be found around 1968–69, long before his America trip. The political, social, and cultural climate of Italy in 1968 and the reflection of its consequences in Rossi's private life afterwards unfolded certain aspects in his thinking and works, while also erased some. Later, in his *A Scientific Autobiography*, Rossi himself stated: "It must have been around 1968 that a general subversion of culture strangely revealed itself in my intellectual development. I recovered aspects of myself which had belonged to me in the past but which I had let fall into neglect."[182]

In many parts of the world, 1968 was a turbulent year, with many social upheavals and student protests. The historical, political and social side of the '68 movement goes beyond the concern of this study, although it should be noted that the substantial change of demographics after World War II as a result of the baby boom led to the creation of a large young generation in the 1960s. This was the first generation to grow up with TV in their homes, which meant they were more integrated with other parts of the world in a certain way, and they also had better access to higher education. This resulted a rise in the number of students in colleges and universities in the 1960s, who revolted against both the conflicts in their own countries (such as the Prague Spring, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and the protests against government policies in Yugoslavia) and international ones (e.g. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Vietnam War, etc.). Italy, post-World War II, entered the years of the *miracolo economico,* triggered by the change in the country's economic model, from agricultural to industrial. During the 1950s, many people from the rural parts of southern Italy migrated to the immensely industrialised north of the country (such as Milan and Turin) to meet the demand for cheap labour. Due to the large flux of people and the need for social or low-income housing to accommodate them, the cities in the north faced uncontrolled expansion in the form of rapid urbanisation at the outskirts, and the migration

[180] Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 105.

[181] Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety,* 106.

[182] Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 81.

patterns and economic growth led also to a transformation in society as more people became able to afford consumer goods.

Due to all of these demographic, economic and social changes in Italy in the 1960s, many young people were able to begin a university education, however the Italian universities at the time were not ready for them, neither in terms of the increased numbers nor in the educational content. In this regard, they were unable to keep up with the massive economic and urban transformation being witnessed in Italian society or its cities. In addition, Italian universities were at the time mostly archaic institutions that still embodied paternalistic patterns of education, where students were considered passive receivers of the knowledge provided by their teachers. As a further setback, the plans put forward by the Italian Minister of Education (the so-called Gui Bill) and the growing interest in neo-Marxism among the student body led to occupations in many universities in the autumn of 1967, especially those in the northern cities such as Milan, Trento, and Turin.[183] Architecture faculties played a particularly significant role, as Robert Lumley claims in his book *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*:

> The architecture faculties were especially lively centres of student politics in the mid sixties. This seems to have been due to their keen and critical interest in the Centre-Left experiment, for which planning and building programmes were touchstones. At the Polytechnic's faculty in Milan, study groups analysed the political functions of architecture and criticized courses and learning methods. In particular, students demanded the coordination of subjects into coherent programmes of study, the integration of research and teaching, and the introduction of collective study. The emphasis was on education as process rather than product. Radical students connected the role of the institution to national politics. Thus, the Centre-Left was increasingly criticized for its failures to introduce urban planning and to improve working-class housing, and the Gui bill was criticized for the way it threatened to separate research from teaching and 'technicize' the study of architecture. In 1967 opposition to the government turned into a fifty-five day occupation at the Milan faculty.[184]

In 1965, Aldo Rossi was appointed as a lecturer at the Polytechnic University of Milan, from where he had graduated in 1959, Rossi had previously been teaching as an assistant to Ludovico Quaroni at the School of Urban Studies in Arezzo in 1963 while also working as an assistant to Carlo Aymonino at the Institute of Architecture, University of Venice between 1963–1965. In Arezzo, together with Ludovico Quaroni, Giancarlo De Carlo and Manfredo Tafuri, Rossi taught an interdisciplinary urban design course addressing the problems of city growth at a territorial scale, integrating knowledge from other disciplines such as geography, sociology and economy. The course, which was criticised by Rossi himself for shifting the role of the architect from being an "intellectual, thinker and inventor" to a "technician re-educated in several disciplines", remained as an incomplete exercise.[185] In Venice, Rossi taught the

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[183] For a more detailed analysis of the student revolts in Italy in 1967–1968, see: Stuart J. Hilwig, "A Young Democracy Under Siege: The Italian Response to the Student Protests of 1968" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2000).

[184] Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990).

[185] Joseph Bedford, "Ludovico Quaroni, Giancarlo De Carlo, Aldo Rossi, Manfredo Tafuri: The Arezzo Course, *Arezzo, Italy*, 1963," in *Radical Pedagogies* website. Last accessed, 24 May, 2016. http://radical-

course *Caratteri distributivi degli edifici* (Organisational characteristics of buildings) with Aymonino, in which the studio was run like a seminar course, focusing on the architecture of the city and the research of built form, and where design was emphasised as a collective work rather than an abstract shape, as conceived in urban planning, or as a mega-structure.[186] The course aimed at relating urban morphology with building typology, an elaboration of which later formed the basis of Rossi's book *The Architecture of the City*.

When Rossi arrived at the Politecnico di Milano, where Ernesto N. Rogers, Vittorio Gregotti, Guido Canella and Franco Albini were teaching at the time, the students were critical of the understanding of architecture as a tool for serving the bourgeoisie by operating from within its own disciplinary boundaries, rather than addressing the "external" social and economic conditions in the cities. Rossi's focus here was on the relation between urban analysis and architectural design, where the analysis was understood to be a typological research and design as a search for a finite form.[187] According to Rossi, typological research and experiments in form are required to coalesce, and together make architecture happen. As Lobsinger and Damiani noted: "Rossi was a politically sympathetic participant during these turbulent years, referred to in Milan as *Sperimentazione*. However, his commitment to architecture as a coherent project made him sceptical of the students' rejection of the discipline on simplistically construed ideological grounds."[188] Against this background, Rossi initiated the Tendenza in the early 1970s in search of an autonomous discipline through an inquiry into rational architecture. Massimo Scolari defined the approach as follows:

> For the Tendenza, architecture is a cognitive process that in and of itself, in the acknowledgment of its own autonomy, is today necessitating a refounding of the discipline; that refuses interdisciplinary solutions to its own crisis; that does not pursue and immerse itself in political, economic, social, and technological events only to mask its own creative and formal sterility, but rather desires to understand them so as to be able to intervene in them with lucidity – not to determine them, but not to be subordinate to them either.[189]

During the turbulent years of the student protests of 1968, during which the discipline-oriented approaches in architecture were attacked, Rossi sought for a way to regain the discipline's self-determined autonomy. The seeds of the Tendenza were sown during this period, shifting the definition of rational architecture from *the architecture of the city* to the *analogous city*, in which Canaletto's painting "Capriccio with Palladian Buildings" was taken as a model. Rossi introduced this transition more as a matter of evolution, as he claimed in 1969 in the preface

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pedagogies.com/search-cases/i07-arezzo-course/

[186] Mary Lou Lobsinger and Roberto Damiani, "Aldo Rossi: Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IAUV) and the Politecnico di Milano, *Venice and Milan,* 1963–1971," in *Radical Pedagogies* website. Last accessed, 24 May, 2016. http://radical-pedagogies.com/search-cases/v13-istituto-universitario-architettura-venezia-iauv-politecnico-milano/

[187] Rossi mentioned this relation between analysis and design in the preface to the second Italian edition of his book *The Architecture of the City* he wrote in 1969.

[188] Lobsinger and Damiani, "Aldo Rossi".

[189] Scolari, "The New Architecture," 131-32.

to the second Italian edition of his book *L'Architettura della Città,* stating that the hypothesis of the analogous city had been developed out of a re-assessment of the concepts introduced in the book.[190] Although Rossi claimed that the idea of the analogous city was derived from this first book, there were some substantial deviations in his arguments in the years following its publication. The shift mentioned here does not suppose a complete rejection of Rossi's initial theoretical framework in his latter studies, although some of the attributed layers to the understanding of context in his *L'Architettura della Città*, which will be discussed in the next section, were replaced by other new dimensions.

In his imaginary Venice painting, Canaletto drew Palladio's unrealised project for the Ponte di Rialto and his two buildings located in Vicenza, namely the Basilica Palladiana and the Palazzo Chiericati, next to each other. Although none of these projects form part of the true Venetian scenery, they "nevertheless constitute an *analogous* Venice", as Rossi put it in the preface to the second Italian edition of the *L'Architettura della Città*.[191] Rossi defined the analogous system with reference to Canatello's painting, in which "the geographical transposition of the monuments within the painting constitutes a city that we recognise, even though it is a place of purely architectural references".[192] Hence, buildings were extracted from their original contexts and juxtaposed to create an imaginary composition that yet alludes to a real city. In other words, historical architectural objects *reinvented* context through their self-referentiality. Rossi first wrote on the idea of the analogy in his introductory text to the *Illuminismo E Architettura del'700 Veneto* exhibition book in 1969 in an article entitled "L'Architettura della Ragione come Architettura di Tendenza" (The Architecture of Reason as Architecture of Tendency), which began with Canaletto's Capriccio painting. **(Figure 3.14)** In the article, Rossi argued that a *collage* of forms is used for architectural speculation to invent a "potential reality" through compositional principles.[193] New meanings are invented through quotations from the past, for as Scolari argued, "the Tendenza accepts all history as *event*, as a 'pile of simulacra,' and perceives 'our architectural culture as a static twilight bathing all forms, all styles, in an equal light'."[194] In this regard, the approach or the design method itself is highly eclectic, where the past is present, though not through imitation, but for reinvention.

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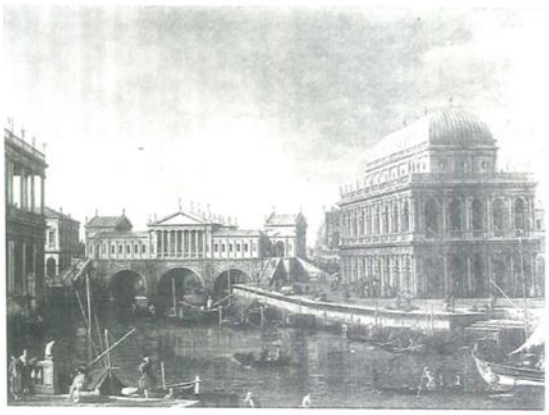
[190] Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1982), 166.

[191] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City,* 166.

[192] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City,* 166.

[193] Aldo Rossi, "L'Architettura della Ragione come Architettura di Tendenza," in *Illuminismo E Architettura del '700 Veneto*, ed. Manlio Brusatin (Veneto: Castelfranco, 1969), 6–15.

[194] Scolari, "The New Architecture," 132.



A. Canaletto
Invenzione di paesaggio veneziano con le architetture di A. Palladio

L'architettura della ragione
come architettura di tendenza
Aldo Rossi

Queste note, come del resto il carattere di questa mostra, non si occupano di ricuperi critici o di monumenti da salvare. Intendono piuttosto rendere manifesto un interesse, e una tendenza, del passato e del presente, per l'architettura della ragione.

L'interesse maggiore che noi proviamo per queste opere è relativo ai principi compositivi e alla costruzione logica da cui sono nate; essendo i loro riferimenti ben fondati su un processo razionale, di costruzione dell'arte, essi ci mostrano una teoria dell'architettura dove la successione cronologica dei fatti perde di importanza. Significato rilevante acquista invece la tendenza; e la tendenza più della contemporaneità mostra le coincidenze singolari tra le costruzioni di Girolamo Frigimelica, le invenzioni di Piranesi, Prato della Valle a Padova, il tempio di Possagno e altre opere e altri artisti. La tendenza si costruisce e si esplicita in questi riferimenti; dove compare quel misto di descrizione e di deformazione, di invenzione e di conoscenza a cui è legata l'esperienza migliore dell'arte moderna e che qui è risolta in una comune volontà di stile.

La prospettiva di Venezia del Canaletto, conservata al Museo di Parma, mi sembra la chiave migliore per intendere il mondo della architettura veneta del periodo illuminista e i caratteri a cui ho accennato. Nel quadro il ponte di Rialto del progetto palladiano, la Basilica, Palazzo Chiericati vengono accostati e descritti come se il pittore rendesse prospetticamente un'ambiente urbano da lui osservato. I tre monumenti palladiani, di cui l'uno è un progetto, costruiscono così una Venezia analoga la cui formazione è compiuta con ele-

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Figure 3.14. Aldo Rossi, "L'Architettura della Ragione come Architettura di Tendenza," 6–7.

This co-existence of elements from different places, styles and periods would later become a substantial model for Rossi, being visible in the sketches and writings he developed after 1968. After this time, his sketches became analogous, with his different projects and the places that affected him deeply (i.e. the statue of San Carlone in Arona, which he used to visit in his childhood, being one of the most recurring elements in his drawings) being re-drawn and juxtaposed.[195] After the 1970s, Rossi's drawings gained more and more an autobiographical character due to the substantial change in his career. After his suspension from teaching in Politecnico di Milano in 1971 by the Ministry of Education due to political frictions, he started teaching at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Zurich (ETH) in 1972. He became a more international figure after his seminal book *L'Architettura della Città* was first translated into Spanish in 1971 and in to German in 1973, and after winning the competition for the San Cataldo Cemetery in Modeno in 1971, which was highly publicised in architectural media. His works were very much acknowledged in United States after the mid-1970s, and he was appointed as a professor in Cornell in 1976, with two exhibitions of his works organised by IAUS in 1976 and 1979 respectively.[196] The United States had a

[195] In 1968, Rossi began the preparation of his *I Quaderni Azzurri* (Blue Notebooks), which he continued producing until the early 1990s. The notebooks include Rossi's notes on cities, museums, architectural theory and history; his trips, accompanied by pastel and watercolour drawings depicting his projects; and the places he visited and remembered. In 1999, the Getty Research Institute published the complete series of 47 books prepared by Rossi between 1968 and 1992.

[196] See: Kenneth Frampton, ed. *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1979* (New York: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1979).

remarkable impact in Rossi's career, which he mentioned in his talk at the Pritzker Prize award ceremony, "I'd like to say a special thank you to America – the first country to recognise my work – and all the young students who filled the American universities during my lectures, and the American press, like the New York Times and Time, which published a lot of beautiful articles."[197]

Rossi became more a designer and less a theoretician after the 1970s, as the increased number of his realised works confirms. The growth in Rossi's fame and popularity in the early 1970s coincided with the decline of critical architectural debates in Italy. Describing this period, Massimo Scolari says:

> For Italian architectural culture, the 1970s began with the gradual extinction of the debate and the pronounced decline of collective commitment. After the shameful government repression of 1970, 1971, and 1972, and the paralysis of the architectural departments hardest hit (Milan, Pescara, Rome, Florence, etc.), the cultural debate that had been most tenaciously rooted in such faculties is also now undergoing a long and dangerous apnea.[198]

During this period, Rossi also became less concerned with the collective commitment in architectural culture. Rather than dealing with the problems of cities and existing conditions – a major topic of interest in his writings in the late 1950s and early 1960s – his architecture became more detached, with emphasis on references to his own autobiographical works. In other words, his model of analogous design excluded the physical, social, economic and political dimensions of context by emphasizing rather the self and cross referentiality of architecture. His preceding book *The Architecture of the City* is therefore worth re-evaluating in its capturing of a more layered, explicit and critical understanding of context in architecture.

The Architecture of the City

Aldo Rossi's seminal book *L'Architettura della Città* (*The Architecture of the City*) was published in Italy in 1966 as a culmination of his preceding teaching materials and articles. **(Figure 3.15)** The study of urban form and the structure of the city dominated the Italian architecture and planning tradition in Italy in the 20th century,[199] and in this realm, Rossi's book was an outcome of its specific context responding to the debates in the Italian architectural discourse of the time in which focus was on urban expansion and rapid urbanisation, especially in Italy's northern industrial cities of Milan, Turin and Genoa, the new

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[197] Aldo Rossi, "Acceptance," in *The Pritzker Architecture Prize, 1990: Presented to Aldo Rossi*, ed. Jensen & Walker (Los Angeles: Jensen & Walker, 1990), unpaginated.

[198] Scolari, "The New Architecture," 134.

[199] For reviews of Italian architectural and urban tradition in the 20th century, see: Nicola Marzot, "The Study of Urban Form in Italy," *Urban Morphology* 6/2 (2002): 59–73 and Anna Bruna Menghini, "The City as Form and Structure: The Urban Project in Italy from the 1920s to the 1980s," *Urban Morphology* 6/2 (2002): 75–86.

urban scale, and the failure of the post-war reconstruction of Italian cities.[200] Reviewing this specific context, Mary Louise Lobsinger argued that "the publication of Rossi's *L'architettura della citta* in 1966 demarcated the conclusion of a wide-ranging debate in Italian architecture about the form, the history, and the future of the contemporary city".[201] Criticizing the privileging of external knowledge gathered from such other disciplines as sociology, economy and geography, in which the city was described by examining the forces acting upon it, Rossi claimed that the discipline of architecture could be considered the primary material for studies of the structure and urban form of the city. His position was unique in its quest to develop a theory of design based on the definition of an autonomous urban science. In other words, his aim was to construct a scientific means of separating the design process from mere intuition.[202]

Figure 3.15. Cover of Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della Città* published in Padova by Marsilio Editori in 1966.

Aldo Rossi's understanding of disciplinary autonomy neither excludes other disciplines nor claims architecture as a detached practice.[203] Instead, he defined autonomy as a disciplinary

[200] For a thorough contextualisation of the book within the critical academic discourse of Italy in the early 1960s, see: Mary Louise Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy: On Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città*," *Journal of Architectural Education* 59/3 (2006): 28–38.

[201] Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy," 30.

[202] For a criticism of architecture as a rational technique by seeking its definition as an urban science, see: Belgin Turan, "Is 'Rational' Knowledge of Architecture Possible? Science and Poiêsis in *L'Architettura della Città*," *Journal of Architectural Education* 51/3 (1998): 158–165.

[203] For a broader review of architectural autonomy and Rossi's position, see: Tahl Kaminer, "Autonomy and Commerce: The Integration of Architectural Autonomy," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 11/01 (2007): 63–70.

continuum, arguing that city is its architecture, and that the architecture of the city can be studied through a thorough analysis of its permanences, which he categorised as propelling and pathological elements. According to Rossi, propelling elements adapt themselves to changing functions over time, and so accelerate the process of urbanisation, while pathological elements retard the process of urbanisation with their resistance to modification. In the end, Rossi's request for architectural autonomy was about using materials from within the discipline for studying the city as a spatial structure, achieved by analysing the principal artefacts – being the dwelling area and the primary elements – in terms of their types. Rossi defined "the concept of type as something that is permanent and complex, a logical principle that is prior to form and that constitutes it".[204] By introducing "type" as the basis of architecture, Rossi asserted typology, the study of types, as the principal methodology in the science of architecture. Here, type is not only an instrument of analysis, but also a design tool, implying that creation in architecture is based on the knowledge of past solutions.[205] In this regard, type is also acknowledged as the "formal register of the collective", since Rossi described the city as a gigantic man-made object, a product of collective citizenry.[206]

Type is defined as a generic structuring principle in architecture, although the specificity of place was not overlooked in Rossi's urban theory, despite attracting very little attention among other scholars and researchers. In *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi's understanding of context can be traced in reference to three different scales: city, study area and *locus*. First, the city is rendered as the context of architecture, in which architecture was born, engaged with and finally became at one with. In his seminar on the theory of architectural design given at the Instituto Universitario dell 'Architettura di Venezia in the 1965–66 academic year, the English translation of which was later published in *Aldo Rossi: Selected Writings and Projects*, Rossi stated:

> A theory of the city, an urban science, treated in these terms, can only be separated with difficulty from an architectural theory; especially if one accepts the first hypothesis: that architecture is born out of, and is one with, the traces of a city. But by this formation, and by its continuous involvement with the urban context, even architecture elaborates certain principles, and transmits itself by certain laws, that makes it autonomous.[207]

Here, he claimed that architecture is autonomous not because it can be designed and studied as a self-referential freestanding object, as Eisenman would later argue, but because the city itself became one spatial urban artefact. In this regard, Rossi's theory of design is also the theory of the city, which he announced as the basis of new architecture. In other words, Rossi

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[204] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 40.

[205] Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 71–74.

[206] Marina Lathouri, "The City as a Project: Types, Typical Objects and Typologies," *Architectural Design* 81/1 (2011): 28.

[207] Aldo Rossi, "Architecture for Museums," in *Aldo Rossi: Selected Writings and Projects*, ed. John O'Regan (Dublin: Gandon Editions, 1983), 18. In the same seminar, Rossi also acknowledged the "subjective contribution, if one wants an autobiography of an artist" and "analogous considerations" of form in the creation of a new architecture. However, quite differently from Rossi's later interpretations, all these personal and psychological components of architecture were sucked in the general and rational theory of the architecture of the city.

believed that architects, and more importantly, students of architecture, can develop their designs by analysing the city, as the context of architecture. Thus introducing context as a significant pedagogical means.

The idea of the city as the sum of different constituent parts was reflected in the idea of the study area introduced at the beginning of the second chapter of the book. Rossi defined the study area as follows:

> Since we assume that between any urban element and any urban artefact there exists an interrelationship whose particularity is related to a specific city, it is necessary to elaborate the nature of the immediate urban context. Such a minimum urban context constitutes the study area, by which we mean a portion of the urban area that can be defined or described by comparison to other larger elements of the overall urban area, for example, the street system.[208]

Translated into English as urban context, Rossi did not use the word *contesto* (the Italian translation of the word "context") in the original Italian publication of the book, but instead put forward the notion of *intorno urbano* (urban surroundings). Rossi aimed to define physically, socially, culturally and geographically the differentiated urban fragments within the city, which, through a typo-morphological research, would enable the recognition of the specificity of the urban artefacts located within it. In this regard, Rossi emphasised the importance of the study area or the urban surroundings when examining the relationship between a city and its urban artefacts, claiming that they reveal how the specificity of the former affects the specificity of the latter. In defining "the city as a spatial system formed of parts, each with its own characteristics", Rossi's direct reference to the Gestaltian understanding is explicit.[209] He referred both to the works of German architect and urban designer Fritz Schumacher and Lynch's well-accepted book *The Image of the City* in this regard, although different from Lynch, "Rossi is less interested in the individuals, who sustain differing spatial concepts of the urban artefact, than in the collective citizenry that shapes the architecture of the city".[210]

Finally, his most direct definition of context came through the notion *locus*, to which Rossi dedicated the third chapter of his book. Rossi began the chapter by writing "The *locus* is a relationship between a certain specific location and the buildings that are in it. It is at once singular and universal."[211] He best explained this relationality and the issues of singular and universal by referencing the Church, the space of the Catholic religion, as an example. According to Rossi, the space of a Church is universal, "where the idea of space itself is nullified and transcended," since "space is determined with respect to a single centre, the

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[208] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 63.

[209] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 65.

[210] Mattias Ekman, "Edifices: Architecture and the Spatial Frameworks of Memory" (PhD diss., The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, 2013), 168.

[211] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 103.

seat of the Pope".[212] However, Rossi argued that "singular points" exist when places of pilgrimage are considered, becoming signs marking a "particular event that occurred there at some time."[213] **(Figure 3.16)** Hence, they shape a context, form a place. Rossi concluded:

> They [the outlines that delineate the singularity of monuments, of the city, and of buildings] trace the relation of architecture to its location – the place of art – and thereby its connections to, and the precise articulation of, the *locus* itself as a singular artefact determined by its space and time, by its topographical dimensions and its form, by its being the seat of a succession of ancient and recent events, by its memory.[214]

In brief, for Rossi, *locus* was not an *a priori* or *a posteriori* concept within the design process, but something that is relationally constructed through time and facilitate the individuality of urban artefacts. This relational understanding of architecture and its location, as determined by space and time, was later dropped from Rossi's definitions of analogous architecture, as has been discussed in the previous sections.

Figure 3.16. View of the Sacro Monte at Varese, Italy, showing the chapels flanking the street to the Holy Sepulcher. Engraving by L. and P. Giarré. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 105.

Rossi was deeply influenced by especially 20th century French geographers, anthropologists, sociologists and philosophers when shaping his theory of *locus*. In the first footnote of the third chapter of *The Architecture of the City* on *locus*, Rossi explained briefly his references,

[212] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 103.

[213] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 103.

[214] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 107.

with the first mentioned source being French geographer Maximilien Sorre's article entitled "Géographie Urbaine et Ecologie." In this article, Sorre claimed that geographical and ecological features of human environments – noting specifically that the geographer has an obligation to consider cities as human environments – influence the physiological, mental and social behaviours of the individual and the morphology of their groupings.[215] Following Sorre, Rossi referred to French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' travelogue *Tristes Tropiques,* containing his documented fieldworks on indigenous settlements, specifically, those of interior Brazil.[216] In addition to these studies examining the relationship between man and his environment, Rossi cited French sociologist Marcel Mauss' work entitled *Essai sur les Variations Saisonnières des Sociétés Eskimos,* underlining the strong connection between people and their locale by referring to Eskimo's names, which carry information on their territory of origin.[217] Finally, Rossi referred to Maurice Halbwachs' book *La Topographie Légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte. Étude de Mémoire Collective*, which argued that the collective memory of Christians is constructed through the invention of religious facts "by situating them in consecrated places" and making these places part of the doctrine.[218]

In brief, of all these different disciplines helped Rossi explain the singularity of places through the spatial divisions that result from the particular relationships between man and his environment. In this regard, *locus* is important in understanding urban artefacts, given their status as material objects that are shaped by the collective in a specific place and time. That said, Rossi mentioned in his book neither how to design in context nor how to accommodate the aspects of everyday life. Christian Norberg-Schulz, in an article published in the catalogue of the First Venice Architecture Biennale, criticised Rossi for not integrating the idea of *locus* thoroughly into his design theory, stating: "Although the word *locus* appears frequently in Rossi's book, he does not investigate the structure and character of places. Therefore he cannot approach the problem of adapting a type to local circumstances.[219] Although Rossi did not offer a precise definition of a design methodology for contextual architecture or architecture that creates context, he did provide a strict emphasis between the lines of what it shouldn't be.

Rossi's first criticism was on the notion of "town design," which was translated as "urban design" in the English edition. Rossi stated:

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[215] Maximilien Sorre, "Géographie Urbaine et Ecologie," in *Urbanisme et Architecture. Études Écrites et Publiées en L'honneur de Pierre Lavedan* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1954), 343-346.

[216] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1955).

[217] Marcel Mauss and Henri Beuchat, "Essai sur les Variations Saisonnières des Sociétés Eskimos. Étude de Morphologie Sociale," *L'Année Sociologique* 9 (1904-1905): 39-132.

[218] Maurice Halbwachs, "The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land," in *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 213.

[219] Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Towards an Authentic Architecture," in *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano, (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 22.

> The assumption that urban artefacts are the founding principle of the constitution of the city denies and refutes the notion of *urban design*. This latter notion is commonly understood with respect to context; it has to do with configurating and constructing a homogenous, coordinated, continuous environment that presents itself with the coherence of a landscape. It seeks laws, reasons, and orders which arise not from a city's actual historical conditions, but from a plan, a general projection of how things should be.[220]

Here, Rossi criticises the understanding of context – although the term he used in the original Italian was *ambiente* – as the plan of the part of a city that dictates certain compositional decisions in designing a building. This can be understood as a criticism of approaches like Colin Rowe's contexturalism, in which architectural interventions attempt to continue or fit into the urban texture of part of a city, as depicted through figure-ground plans. According to Rossi, urban artefacts "*constitute* forms rather than continue them".[221] Hence, for Rossi, buildings cannot be determined compositionally by their contexts, as depicted in urban plans, since they invent and create their own contexts. It is for this reason that Rossi emphasises the notion *locus* not as an a priori concept, shaping architectural form, but as an art of place or making of place.

When reading the English translation of the book, readers face Rossi's criticism of context, in which he states: "… context seems strangely bound up with illusion, with illusionism. As such it has nothing to do with the architecture of the city, but rather with the making of a scene …".[222] Rossi here is criticising the Italian notion of *ambiente*, which was further expanded in the section entitled "*I monumenti. Critica al concetto di ambiente*", which appeared in the English edition as "Monuments: a Summary of the Critique of the Concept of Context," in which Rossi argued:

> [I]t would be foolish to think that the problem of architecture can be resolved solely from the compositional viewpoint or newly revealed through a context or a purported extension of a context's parameters. These notions are senseless because context is specific precisely in that it is constructed through architecture. The singularity of any work grows together with its *locus* and its history, which themselves presuppose the existence of the architectural artefact.[223]

In this entire passage, the term context has to be replaced with *ambiente,* as was written in the original Italian. In addition to the understanding of context as plan in urban design practices, Rossi was critical of the understanding of context here as cityscape, as scene making or as fitting into the existing urban scenery. Rossi's criticism of *ambiente* was in fact directed towards his master Rogers' understanding of the term, which will be discussed further in the next section.

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[220] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 116.

[221] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 118.

[222] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 123.

[223] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 127.

Following his arguments on *ambiente*, Rossi wrapped up his definition of *locus* by adding a final and perhaps most essential dimension to his theory: the concept of "collective memory" that he derived from Maurice Halbwachs' book *La Mémoire Collective* (1950). According to Halbwachs, "memory depends on the social environment", since "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories".[224] Influenced by this definition of memory as collective and spatial, Rossi claimed, "The city is the *locus* of the collective memory,"[225] and was critical of the sort of "naturalism" that explains architectural form as a direct outcome of the circumstantial forces acting upon it. For him, the important forces are only those that lead to long-term transformations in the city, as he explained further in the fourth chapter of the book by referring to Halbwachs' analysis on expropriations and Hans Bernoulli's thesis of private land ownership. In this regard, his understanding of context aimed to encapsulate a definition that breaks the causal links between the immediate programmatic, social, political and economic forces and the form of urban artefacts (and hence the city). Rather than architecture that follows forces, Rossi favoured the precision of architectural form in adopting itself to the changing urban context through its finiteness. In this regard, he identified the city as an intelligent collective form that persists, but ignored completely power relations in his theory of the city as a collective form that remembers its past, as Hilde Heynen stated:

> The discourse of Halbwachs and Rossi seems to convey a peaceful image of urban communities who decide quite easily and without major conflicts on spatial issues of building and preservation. The seemingly self-evident continuity of large parts of the city's historical substance, however, often hides severe disagreements and vehement discussions. A closer look reveals that certain groups succeeded far better than others in imprinting their mark on the urban landscape and having their traces preserved. In geographer David Harvey's account of the building of the Basilica of the Sacré Coeur in Paris, for example, it becomes clear how contested this building was at the time of its construction.[226]

L'architettura della Città was translated into Spanish, German and Portuguese in the 1970s, and finally appeared in English in 1982. Published as part of the *Oppositions* book series of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, *The Architecture of the City* was introduced to English-speaking readers following *A Scientific Autobiography*. Due to this reshuffling of the chronology of the books, Rossi's initial design theory was mostly grasped and interpreted through the lens of his latter book, and the editor's introduction contributed to this conception, since he presented Rossi's later developed theory of analogy as if it was the principal topic of *The Architecture of the City.* Peter Eisenman, in his introduction entitled "The Houses of Memory: The Texts of Analogy", stated:

> Analogy is Rossi's most important apparatus … Yet unlike the city, the urban skeleton, the analogue is detached from specific place and specific time, and becomes instead an abstract

[224] Maurice Halbwachs, "The Social Frameworks of Memory," in *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37-38.

[225] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 130.

[226] Hilde Heynen, "Petrifying Memories: Architecture and the Construction of Identity," *The Journal of Architecture* 4/4 (1999): 373.

> *locus* existing in what is a purely typological or *architectural* time-place. In this way, by displacing type from history to make a connection between place and memory, Ross, attempts through the erasure of history and transcendence of real places to reconcile the contradictions of modernist utopia – literally "no place" – and humanist reality – built "some place".[227]

Here, Eisenman distorted, perhaps consciously, Rossi's definition of the city, and *locus* as determined by the specificity of place and time. The analogous city was compared in terms of value with the real city that all of Rossi's initial writings dwelled upon to develop a theory of design.

Casabella Continuità

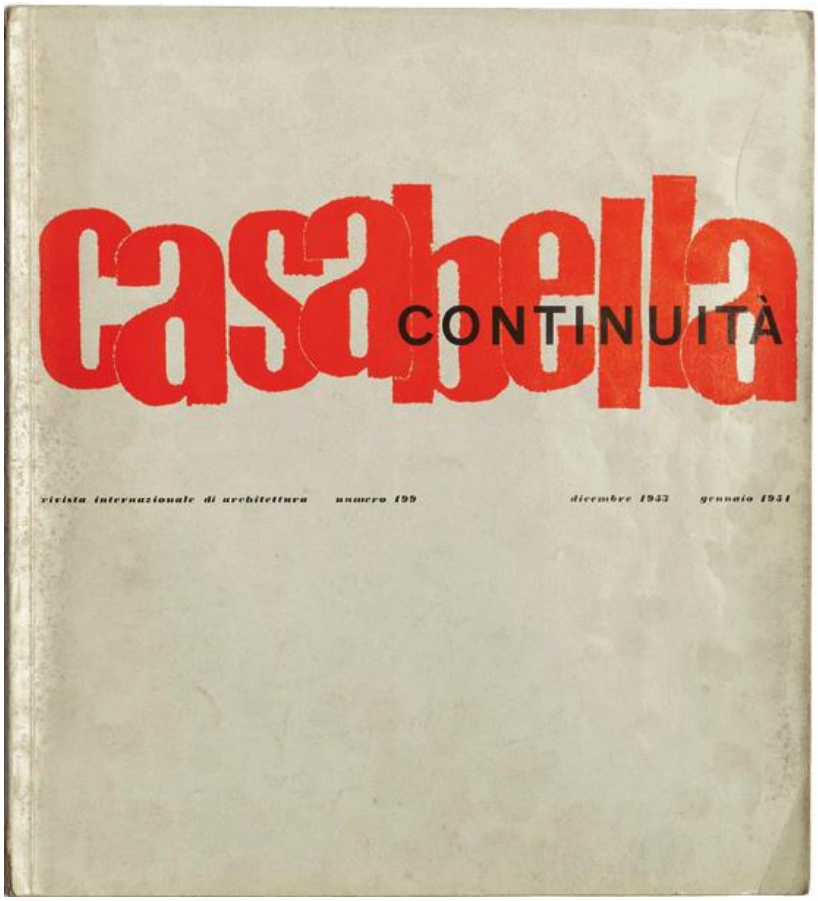

Figure 3.17. The cover of *Casabella Continuità* 199 (December 1953–January 1954), the first issue edited by Ernesto N. Rogers.

Ernesto Nathan Rogers, teacher, architectural critic and the founder of the BBPR group (together with Gian Luigi Banfi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Enrico Peressutti), was the editor of the journal *Casabella* from 1953 to 1964. Immediately after becoming the editor, Rogers added the term *Continuità* to the title, which set the agenda for the journal and would

[227] Peter Eisenman, introduction to *The Architecture of the City,* by Aldo Rossi (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1982), 8.

influence Italian architectural culture for the next ten years. It was at this time that many architects and scholars in Italy began reconsidering the relationship between Modern Architecture and Italy's deep-rooted tradition, since "The collapse of fascism during World War II, the bitter lessons learned during the antifascist resistance, and the staggering challenges of post-war reconstruction forced architects during the 1950s to reformulate the principles of progressive architecture and to redefine the political orientation of modernism in Italy."[228] Rossi is indebted to the journal *Casabella Continuità* and his master Ernesto N. Rogers for his early theoretical formation, which served as a substantial background for *The Architecture of the City*. Rossi contributed to the journal occasionally in 1958 while studying at Milan Polytechnic and worked as one of its co-editors between 1961 and 1964.[229] As stated by Rossi himself years later, "I believe his [Rogers'], and in part our, glorious old *'Casabella-Continuità'* to be the true school created by Rogers, much more important, official and international than our good old *Milanese Polytechnic*."[230] Hence, in order to grasp fully Rossi's definition of *locus*, it is necessary to visit the main concepts developed by Rogers and the major discussions he held during his *Casabella* period.

In Rogers' first editorial text in *Casabella Continuità*, which was published in issue number 199, December 1953–January 1954 and was entitled "Continuity",[231] he defined the notion of continuity as "historical awareness … against every manifestation of formalism, past and present".[232] **(Figure 3.17)** Attacking both ahistorical modernist formalism and chauvinistic folklorism, Rogers introduced an awareness of Italy's deep-rooted past as a third way of carrying on modern architecture rooted in tradition.[233] He believed that the past could be carried into the present by maintaining the premises of the modern movement, without imitating directly historical and traditional forms. During this period, Rogers was influenced greatly by Italian philosopher Enzo Paci, who also actively involved in the editorial board of *Casabella Continuità.*[234] Paci's phenomenological discourse of life-world (derived from Husserl's *Lebenswelt*) as the "place of historically determined authenticity" contributed significantly to Rogers' search for continuity through tradition.[235] Luca Molinari, in his

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[228] Dennis P. Doordan, "Changing Agendas: Architecture and Politics in Contemporary Italy," *Assemblage* 8 (1989): 64.

[229] For a contextualisation of Rossi's *Casabella* period and his early writings published therein, see: Carlo Olmo, "Across the Texts," *Assemblage* 5 (1988): 90-121.

[230] Aldo Rossi, "Testimonials for Ernesto N. Rogers Twenty Years after his Death," *Zodiac* 3 (1988): 38.

[231] Rogers' editorial texts in *Casabella Continuità* were published both in English and Italian. In this chapter I refer always to the English translations as they appeared in the journal.

[232] Ernesto N. Rogers, "Continuity," *Casabella Continuità* 199 (1953-54): I.

[233] Rogers, "Continuity," I.

[234] For a more detailed account of Rogers' relation with Enzo Paci, see: Jorge Otero-Pailos, "Theorizing the Anti-Avant-Garde: Invocations of Phenomenology in Architectural Discourse, 1945-1989" (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002).

[235] Stefano Zecchi, "Enzo Paci: The Life World from an Empirical Approach," in *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations – Expanding Dynamics – Life-Engagements. A Guide for Research and Study*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, (Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media, 2002), 480.

comprehensive PhD thesis on Ernesto N. Rogers, showed how the term “continuity” was linked directly to the identity crisis of Italian architectural culture in the 1950s, as well as to the crisis in Rogers’ personal life, and hence contained and gained many different layers of meaning.[236] However, the meaning that concerns us more here is the continuity of buildings with their natural and historical surroundings, as he explained through the concepts of *preesistenze ambientali* (pre-existing environment) or *ambiente* (environment/ surrounding).

Rogers’ understanding of *preesistenze ambientali* was best explained in his editorial text entitled “*Le Preesistenze Ambientali e i Temi Pratici Contemporanei*” (Existing Environment and the Practical Content of Contemporary Architecture), which was published in *Casabella Continuità* issue number 204 in 1954. **(Figure 3.18)** In this article, Rogers stated, “… an architect should be accused of formalism who *a priori* fails to absorb in his work the details and the characteristic content to be found in the environment”.[237] In this respect, an architect should embrace existing buildings, streets, and the cultural and natural aspects of the environment in which he is working, and should reflect the character of its context. In his view, tradition is embedded in these presences in the surrounding environment, meaning that “to consider the environment means to consider history”.[238] In other words, as long as buildings are harmoniously continuous with their surroundings, they can be considered part of a historical continuity. Rogers exemplified his assertion by saying that an architect, “far from designing for Milan a building which he might equally have designed for Brazil, he will try, in every street in Milan, to construct a building which to some extent reflects its surrounding themes”.[239] The architectural implications of this argument can be best seen in his Torre Velasca project built in Milan.

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[236] Luca Molinari, “Continuità: A Response to Identity Crisis. Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Italian Architectural Culture after 1945” (PhD diss., Delft University of Technology, 2008).

[237] Ernesto N. Rogers, “Existing Environment and the Practical Content of Contemporary Architecture,” *Casabella Continuità* 204 (1954): VII. This text was later re-published in Joan Ockman’s anthology *Architecture Culture 1943-1968* with a new English translation where the notion *ambiente* was translated as context.

[238] Rogers, “Existing Environment,” VIII.

[239] Rogers, “Existing Environment,” VII.

Ernesto N. Rogers

Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei

Due, almeno, sono i passi avanti che l'architettura contemporanea può fare in coerenza con le proprie premesse teoriche; l'uno riguarda l'affermazione più precisa dei suoi strumenti pratici nell'ordine di un perfezionamento delle tecniche atte a fissare nella realtà fisica il suo linguaggio figurativo. L'altro riguarda il maggior approfondimento di questo linguaggio nel senso che esso sia sempre più comprensivo dei valori culturali nei quali le nuove forme s'inseriscono storicamente.

Nell'articolo « Pretesti per una critica non formalistica » (*Casabella* n. 200) ho cercato di delineare alcuni presupposti che mi pare siano necessari affinchè il giudizio, intorno ad una determinata opera architettonica, non sia schematicamente astratto, ma s'immedesimi nelle condizioni ambientali (e cioè anche storiche) nelle quali essa si manifesta.

Ad esempio, si potrà tacciare di formalismo una critica che, nell'apprezzare a posteriori il significato di una costruzione brasiliana, non tenga nel dovuto conto il fatto che essa sorge proprio in Brasile; reciprocamente si dovrà accusare di formalismo quell'architetto che non assorba a priori nella sua opera i particolari e caratteristici contenuti suggeritigli dall'ambiente.

Sorge qui immediato un problema più generale i cui termini possono essere posti nel seguente ragionamento: poichè ogni architettura è, per definizione, un'opera d'arte e ogni opera d'arte è, per definizione, un atto originale, qual è il limite che un artista non deve superare affinchè la sua creazione non esca — per così dire — dai margini reali e s'inserisca organicamente nella situazione spazio-temporale data? La lotta tra conservatori e innovatori è sempre attorno alla valutazione pratica di questo dilemma teorico. La confusione delle discussioni è dovuta, oltre che alle congeniali attitudini di ciascuno a essere più o meno creativo, al fatto che gli uni e gli altri non

Figure 3.18. Ernesto N. Rogers, "*Le Preesistenze Ambientali e i Temi Pratici Contemporanei,*" *Casabella Continuità* 204 (1954): 3.

Torre Velasca, designed by the BBPR group, can be seen as an ultimate representation of Rogers' ideas on historicism, tradition and the pre-existing environment, as disseminated internationally through the editorial pages of *Casabella Continuità*. **(Figure 3.19)** The building was a direct expression of the interpretation of the program (the first 18 floors were devoted to offices, separated from the upper extended volume of apartments by a service floor), and resembled greatly the medieval towers and fortresses of Northern Italy. The chosen materials were brick and pink stone, following the colours of the old Milanese buildings, and the one of Duomo in particular. In this regard, Rogers aimed to design the building as a truly Milanese

one, embracing the formal, material and stylistic characteristics of its built environment. One of the most polemical issues of *Casabella Continuità* was published while the building was under construction in 1957 (completed in 1958). In his editorial text of issue number 215, Rogers asked, “Can architecture further develop the premises of the Modern Movement, or is it changing its course? This is the problem: continuity or crisis?”[240] Rogers himself saw no crisis, and the nature of the continuity that he acknowledged can be traced throughout the following pages of the issue in Vittorio Gregotti and Aldo Rossi’s articles on Art Nouveau and the Amsterdam School, and Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola’s project Bottega d’Erosmo, as one of the first examples of the *Neoliberty* style.

Figure 3.19. BBPR, Torre Velasca, Milan. Source: http://gbrlferraresi.tumblr.com/post/55813965468/ogni-tanto-un-po-di-torre-velasca-è-necessaria

Torre Velasca and this particular issue of the *Casabella Continuità* fired up a debate between Rogers and English architectural critic Reyner Banham. Banham, publishing an article in *Architectural Review* as its new assistant editor, attacked the positions taken by Rogers, Gregotti and Rossi, marking them as a retreat from modern architecture by reintroducing what had happened before as a contemporary alternative, which he called “infantile regression”.[241] Rogers responded to this criticism in his editorial pages of *Casabella* by calling Banham “the custodian of frigidaire”, and stated:

[240] Ernesto N. Rogers, “Continuity or Crisis?,” *Casabella Continuità* 215 (1957): IX-X.

[241] Reyner Banham, “Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture,” *Architectural Review* 125/747 (1959): 235.

> I am convinced that our experience has been useful. So useful that in spite of all, Italian critics and architectonic production have taken a few steps forward that have not yet been taken in other countries.
> Others, too, will move along, and perhaps in different directions, according to the dictates of their particular cultural and economic conditions; but I do not believe that our experience – that of a pronounced historical awareness, of the necessary unity of culture in the orders of space and time, the relationship of new works with their pre-existent environments – is of little account or to be discarded with such superficiality.[242]

A few months after this discussion, Rogers presented Torre Velasca at the last CIAM meeting, held in Otterlo in 1959, where each participant was asked to present one project that best explained their architectural thought. Here again, Rogers faced with harsh criticism, especially from Peter Smithson, who accused Rogers of being irresponsible by using former formal plastic vocabulary, which he considered both ethically and aesthetically wrong for the representation of the "closed aesthetics" of "closed societies".[243] Bakema concluded the discussion by saying: "I think that form is a communication about life, and I don't recognise in this building a communication about life in our town. You are resisting contemporary life."[244]

In brief, Rogers was aiming to identify a mediating approach between tradition and modernity, history and invention, and the building and its environment. Although he was against pastiche or folklorism, his Torre Velasca tower was criticised as sacrificing modernity by recirculating historical architectural forms. In this regard, Rogers himself fell into the trap of formalism and historical revivalism that he had warned architects against in his first editorial text in *Casabella Continuità.* He related history to the presences in the environment, and so his definition of *ambiente* referred to a compositional, material and stylistic fit to one's physical surroundings. On the other hand, Rossi's understanding of history was embedded in the *permanencies* rather than in the *presences*, which is why he adopted typology as an instrument in his studies of cities and artefacts in terms of their enduring generative structures. It is apparent that continuity and tradition were essential aspects for both Rogers and Rossi, although Rossi did not seek continuity in the picturesque characteristics of cities, but rather in their genetic codes. Rossi was critical of Rogers' *ambiente,* since he was against understanding context as *a priori* to architectural design, as something to be followed and extended in visual harmony. He introduced *locus* to alter Rogers' conception of pre-existing environments, arguing that context is constructed rather than continued. In other words, by defining *locus* as the singularity of place invented through the works of architecture, Rossi was against the picturesque, formalist and authoritarian definition of context found in Rogers' *ambiente*.

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[242] Ernesto N. Rogers, "The Evolution of Architecture. An Answer to the Caretaker of Frigidaires," *Casabella Continuità* 228 (1959): VI.

[243] Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo: Documents of Modern Architecture* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1961): 94-97.

[244] Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo,* 97.

Conclusion

Rossi's early understanding of context, as elaborated in his *The Architecture of the City,* covered three substantial layers: city, study area and *locus*. He began by introducing the city as the context of architecture, which came into being through the city and transformed reciprocally. Here, city as the context of architecture was introduced as a pedagogical tool, given that every design process, it can be argued, is based on an analysis of the city. By introducing typological research, Rossi spoke for "the progress of architecture as science" rather than presuming "the relationship between analysis and design to be a problem of the individual architect".[245] In other words, any analysis of the city as a context should be a collective work, and is the responsibility of every architect, in that it cannot be reduced to a singular site analysis. Second, Rossi introduced the concept of study area or urban surroundings, referring to typo-morphologically differentiated areas within the city. Here, context, as an intermediary level between the city and the particular location of an architectural project, offers a more concentrated area of analysis, allowing the specificity of urban artefacts to be uncovered. As the third dimension, Rossi elaborated the notion of *locus* as the art of place constructed through architecture. Challenging Rogers' *ambiente*, Rossi criticised the understanding of context as *a priori* to design that is followed and continued by an architectural intervention. In contrast, his understanding of *locus* as context is framed as something to be invented with the aim of revealing the specificities of its particular place. These particularities go beyond the mere visual and compositional characteristics of a location, residing instead in the deep relationship between men and their environments.

Rossi's early conception of context, as summarised here, underwent a number of changes after the discipline started to be questioned on ideological grounds after 1968. After his suspension from teaching and his departure from Italy in the early 1970s, his role was more practitioner than theorist and teacher from the mid-1970s onwards. In the analogous architecture he would later create, any reference to a specific place or time became lost, and his definition of context as a cultivation of the singularity of place was replaced by an abstract imaginary place that was invented through analogies, with interest in the real city being swallowed up by an interest in the fictitious ideal. Hence, Rossi's architectural thinking as well as his understanding of context, shifted from the architecture of the city to the analogous city, from collective memory to personal memory, from permanencies to remembrances, and from the relationality of architecture and *locus* to the cross-referentiality of forms. These latter categories became associated with the precepts of postmodern architecture that Jencks introduced as a counter-reformation, with particular reference to the First Venice Architecture Biennale.

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[245] Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 111.

The shift in Rossi's understanding of context from place to memory can be traced in his drawings. Rossi was producing oil paintings in the 1948–1950 period, just as he was starting his education at Milan Polytechnic. As a very young student he was influenced by the drawings of Italian metaphysical painters Giorgio de Chirico, Giorgio Morandi and Mario Sironi, and in his early drawings he depicted Milan's industrial periphery of factories, chimneys, tramlines, etc., as the central elements of his composition, with a complete absence of human figures.[246] In a perspective view, he was presenting the architecture of the city through elementary forms and simple volumes, the outlines of which were emphasised with thick black lines. In this way, the roughness of his paintings depicted the toughness of the city, with focus on the specific nature of its real places. After a gap of two decades, Rossi returned to drawing in the early 1970s. His compositions became visually dense but also lighter as a result of his shift from oil to ink, and consequently, his use of thinner lines. Rather than depicting real places in the city, he drew elements from his own architectural projects and childhood memories. For instance, in one of his first drawings from the 1970s entitled "Composizione con S. Carlo-Citta e Monumenti", he drew his Gallaratese housing project, the Segrate Monument and the ossuary at the cemetery in Modena, alongside the statute of San Carlo Borromeo in Arona that Rossi had often visited as a child. Rossi drew the statue with its internal stairs leading to the top, from where visitors can see the surrounding landscape, literally through the eyes of the saint. These elements, imported from different places and times, were drawn together but in different perspectives and at different scales, thus suspending the idea of specific place and time. **(Figure 3.20)**

In Rossi's analogous drawings after the 1970s, remembered architectural elements were decontextualised and then recomposed, creating dream-like images with composite formations. This is one of the fundamental aspects of dreams put forward by Sigmund Freud, who said, "The possibility of creating composite structures stands foremost among the characteristics which so often lend dreams a fantastic appearance, for it introduces into the content of dreams elements which could never have been objects of actual perception."[247] Rossi's analogous drawings presented also elements in their compositions that in reality could not be perceived as such. To achieve this, Rossi applied strategies of *condensation* and *displacement*, which were defined by Freud as two fundamental aspects of dream-work, when forming his composite drawings.[248] Like dreams, Rossi's analogous drawings were a reproduction of elements that left traces in his personal memory, and after the 1970s, Rossi focused more on his autobiographical work rather than the collective architecture of the city and the art of place.

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[246] Carter Ratcliff argued that among these three painters, Rossi's early drawings resemble mostly the city landscapes of Mario Sironi from 1922–1923. Carter Ratcliff, "Introduction," in *Aldo Rossi: Drawings and Paintings* ed. Morris Adjmi and Giovanni Bertolotto (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 11.

[247] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 339.

[248] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

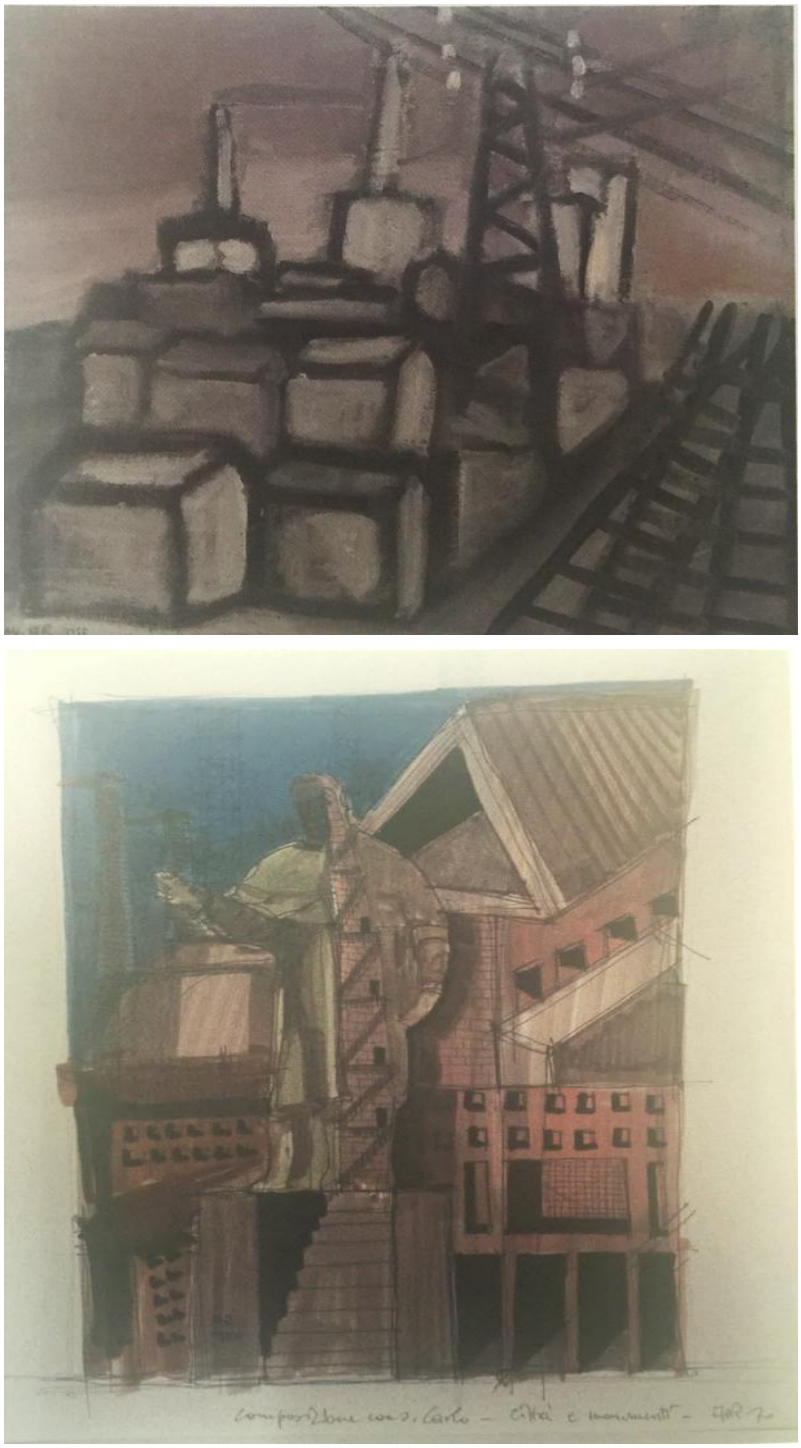

Figure 3.20. Top: Rossi's "untitled" drawing (oil on canvas, 50X40 cm), 1950. Bottom: Rossi's "Composizione con S. Carlo-Citta e Monumenti," (mixed media, 21X30 cm), 1970. Source: Morris Adjmi and Giovanni Bertolotto, *Aldo Rossi: Drawings and Paintings*, 162, 95.

The comparison of the two drawings above, one from 1950 and the other from 1970, exemplifies the shift from the *poetics of reality* to the *poetics of memory* in Rossi's architectural thinking. Rossi's early drawings depicted the city as composed of massive geometric forms drawn from a bird's-eye view with a drawing style that represents their toughness. It is a city made collectively by factories, houses, infrastructures and so on and

presented Milan's by then mostly debated industrial periphery. His later interest in the problems of the urban expansion of Northern Italian cities were previously investigated by Rossi through his "rough" drawings. His perception of the city in his student years was bound to the specific place and time and his main project for at least the following two decades was to develop a theory of the city that could provide a rational explanation of the historical development and growth of the cities. Rossi's later dream like composite drawings depicted his altered understanding of analogous city as defined through the memory of his own autobiographical works. Therefore, his later drawings lack tangible urbanity, which was visible in his initial drawings. That said, a critical interpretation of Rossi's early works shows us how city as context can be defined as an intrinsic part of design theory, as a collectively discovered and spatially invented project, which Rossi himself later abandoned.

4. From Spatial to Iconographic: "Context" in the Works of Robert Venturi & Denise S. Brown

Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown at *Strada Novissima*

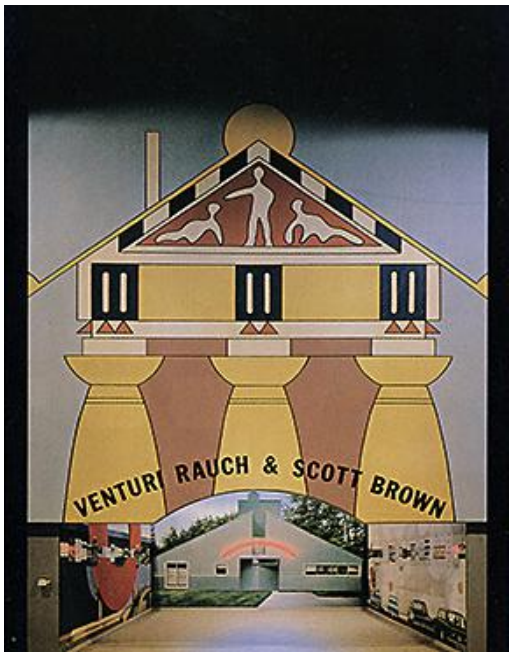

Figure 4.1. Façade designed by Robert Venturi, John Rauch and Denise Scott Brown for the First Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980. Source: *GA Document* 2 (1980): 19.

Robert Venturi, John Rauch and Denise Scott Brown's façade at the *Strada Novissima* was one of the most significant representatives of the American approach to postmodern architecture with its eclectic use of classical vocabularies combined with pop art techniques. **(Figure 4.1)** Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown designed the façade as an extremely thin two-dimensional surface with drawings of three oversised Doric columns carrying a pediment on which were depicted three abstract human figures. The façade recalled that of a Greek temple, but was unconventional in having an odd number of columns in awkward proportions. Furthermore, the Greek temple frontage was not completely revived since the façade was designed like cardboard or wallpaper, in that the columns and the spaces in-between did not serve as an entrance to the exhibition behind, with entry provided via a cutaway below the represented façade, which was attached to the existing columns of the Arsenale. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown neither re-appropriated forms or rules of classical architecture, nor searched for historic accuracy. Their aim was rather to *represent* the classical vocabulary. Venturi stated a year after the Biennale that "we cannot construct Classical buildings, but we can *represent* them, via appliqué upon the substance of the building".[249] This representation was achieved by adopting Pop Art techniques of irony and parody, experimented upon with mechanical reproduction methods. The artists used the colours red, yellow and blue in the façade, as the most predominantly used colours in Pop Art.

[249] Robert Venturi, "The RIBA Annual Discourse," in *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953–1984*, ed. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 105.

Their façade at the *Strada Novissima* was also a good example of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's approach to contextual architecture. Scott Brown, in her article "Talking about Context", dated 1992, stated: "In our opinion, contextual borrowings should never deceive; you should know what the real building consists of beneath the skin. For this reason our allusions are representations rather than copies of historic precedents. The deceit is only skin deep."[250] Although their representational flat Biennial façade expresses the ideas of Venturi and Scott Brown very prominently, surprisingly, they rarely wrote or talked about their participation in the Biennale, and the project was even not listed among the more than 170 projects presented on the firm's website.[251] There is also no information on the Biennale in their archives, so it would seem that their participation in the event was completely disregarded afterwards by the architects' themselves. When asked why, Scott Brown stated they did not like the way they were treated at the exhibition, especially by Robert Stern, whose main task was to coordinate the American camp at the exhibition.[252] She mentioned the fact that Venturi's mother was cut from the image of the Vanna Venturi House, which was exhibited opposite the entrance in their section, although it has emerged that there were pragmatic reasons for this. In his interview with Léa-Catherine Szacka, Francesco Cellini stated that there was no technical infrastructure in Italy at the time to create large high quality images, and therefore the façade of the Vanna Venturi house, the picture of which was planned to be around 6 x 6 m, was painted leaving the mother out.[253] In the end, Venturi and Scott Brown were not completely happy to be affiliated with the *Strada Novissima* exhibition, or the theme "The Presence of the Past", although their absence from the event would have been unimaginable. Perhaps the disputed encounter of American postmodernism with the European architectural climate may have been the main source of Venturi and Scott Brown's dismissal of the event, in that their eclectic "populist" approach was not completely welcomed by the conventionally strict disciplinary context in Europe.

The most grounded criticisms of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown came from the critics of the Biennale, who refer mainly to the problems of separating content and meaning, space and iconography, and form and decoration in their architecture. American architectural historian and critic Vincent Scully, who contributed to Venturi's fame through the publication of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, appreciated Venturi's re-appropriation of "symbol" as an essential component of architecture. However, Scully also criticised his works, stating, "Venturi may sometimes have tended to separate the physical and associational

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[250] Denise Scott Brown, "Talking About Context," *Lotus* 74 (1992): 128. This issue of the *Lotus* was specifically dedicated to "Contextualism," see Chapter I.

[251] "VSB Venturi Scott Brown," in the website of Venturi and Scott Brown Architects. Last accessed, 18 December, 2015. http://venturiscottbrown.org/projects/indexdates.html

[252] Denise Scott Brown interviewed by Esin Komez Daglioglu, Philadelphia, 10 May, 2015.

[253] Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale" (PhD diss., University College London, 2012), 312.

effects of form more than they in reality can or should be."[254] Christian Norberg-Schulz, the Norwegian architectural theorist known for his writings on architectural phenomenology, also referred to the separation of iconography from form and space in Venturi's architecture. In his text published in the catalogue of the Biennale, he stated:

> Of particular importance to Venturi is the use of "conventional elements," such as quotations from past architecture … By introducing conventional elements, Venturi initiated what has been called "Radical Eclecticism." The term implies that meaning mainly has to do with "memories." As far as we can see, Venturi refers to two kinds of meanings: the spatial ones which stem from the interaction of "interior and exterior forces," and the "iconographic" ones, which are determined by memories. As he neither explains the nature of the forces nor the memories, however, his theoretical basis remains somewhat vague.[255]

Norberg-Schulz criticised Venturi for the lack of theoretical underpinnings explaining his "radical eclecticism", a term coined by architectural critic Charles Jencks. In fact, for Venturi, and also for Jencks, radical eclecticism was seen as the most appropriate strategy for contextual architecture.[256] As Venturi later proclaimed, "viva variety of vocabularies for context's sake: architectures, not architecture".[257] It is obvious that for Venturi, the discipline of architecture has a language that embraces different vocabularies, and so representing these vocabularies through iconography can be understood to be a contextual act. In other words, context in architecture is defined as the associations with the language(s) of architecture, in which vocabularies became symbols in communication. At the time, Colin Rowe was also searching for the dictionary of vocabularies, although his search was for the vocabularies to establish the "science of architecture" and to ignite the design process within the field's own autonomous formal evolution. Venturi's aim, on the other hand, was to adopt vocabularies to engage with popular cultures by evoking associations.

The separation of iconographic content from the spatial one gave a prominent status to the façade in the architecture of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. Façades became a message carrier, as the single most significant element providing communication between a building and the public. In other words, it is through the iconographic content of the façade that a building relates to its physical and social context by referring to the taste cultures of its society. Here, iconography means the symbolic aspects of architectural forms that evoke associations not through modernist formal purity or historical revivalism, but through the representation of

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[254] Vincent Scully, "How Things Get To Be The Way They Are Now," in *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture, Venice Architecture Biennale Catalogue*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 17.

[255] Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Towards an Authentic Architecture," in *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture, Venice Architecture Biennale Catalogue*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 21.

[256] Charles Jencks, "Towards Radical Eclecticism," in *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 30–37.

[257] Robert Venturi, "Mal Mots: Aphorisms-Sweet and Sour-By an Anti-Hero Architect," in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, ed. Robert Venturi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 316.

various architectural vocabularies, including “high art and Pop – Scarlatti *and* the Beatles”.[258] According to Venturi, this is the most viable approach to architecture, and is specifically a contextual one, since, as he stated:

> In attempting to derive an architecture that is relevant for diversities of culture, taste, and place, I put the burden on the symbolic rather than the formal or technical aspects of architecture. This is because symbolic elements are more flexible and adaptable than formal and, especially, structural-technical elements. They are also less subject to limitations of use, cost, and physical stability, and to the constraints of standardization.[259]

As a consequence, the façade became an autonomous element in design that accommodates associational symbolic elements to communicate. With the façade left detached from space, built forms were left as generic boxes, lofts that could accommodate various functions and their changes, as could be seen in many laboratory projects and commercial buildings designed by the firm.

When viewed from this perspective, the *Strada Novissima* exhibition was most suitable for Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, since their architecture had already dealt with the façade as an autonomous design problem. They had in fact designed their façade for *Strada Novissima* a few years previously as part of their façade experiments for imaginary houses. Named the “Eclectic House Project”, they described it as “a theoretical exercise on the idea of the decorated front and the ordinary or ‘Mary-Anne’ behind”.[260] These façades embody elements of different architectural styles and periods, being composed in distorted proportions, and some were later implemented in Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown’s various house designs, such as House in Absecon (Project), 1977; House in Delaware, 1978; and House at Sony Creek, 1984. The Eclectic House Project was in fact a reflection on Scottish botanist and landscape design writer John Claudius Loudon’s cottages presented at “A Dwelling for a Man and His Wife, with Children”, published in *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* in 1834.[261] Loudon’s cottages, which were prime examples of decorated sheds, were previously referred to by Venturi and Scott Brown in the first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas* in 1972. **(Figure 4.2)** Loudon drew different ornamental jackets – façades – for his cottages, referring to different architectural traditions that reflect the different tastes of the ordinary man. The aim was to communicate with people by evoking associations through the implementation of diverse styles, and in this regard, both Loudon and Venturi acknowledged the iconographic representational façade as a message carrier and communicator. According to Venturi, architecture has always been the carrier of messages with the embedded signs

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[258] Robert Venturi, “Diversity, Relevance and Representation in Historicism, or *Plus ça Change*… plus a Plea for Pattern all over Architecture with a Postscript on my Mother’s House,” in *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953-1984*, ed. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 109.

[259] Venturi, “Diversity,” 111.

[260] “VSBA Eclectic House Project,” in the website of Venturi and Scott Brown Architects. Last accessed, 18 December, 2015. http://venturiscottbrown.org/pdfs/EclecticHouses01.pdf

[261] John Claudius Loudon’s cottages were later published in George L. Hersey, “J.C. Loudon and Architectural Associationism,” *The Architectural Review* 144 (1968): 88–92.

and symbols found on it, being observable in Egyptian hieroglyphs, Gothic stained glass windows, Renaissance and Baroque murals, Byzantine mosaic murals, etc.[262] In this regard, Venturi and Scott Brown sought the architecture of communication from within the classical architecture of Rome to the commercial vernacular pop landscapes of Las Vegas.

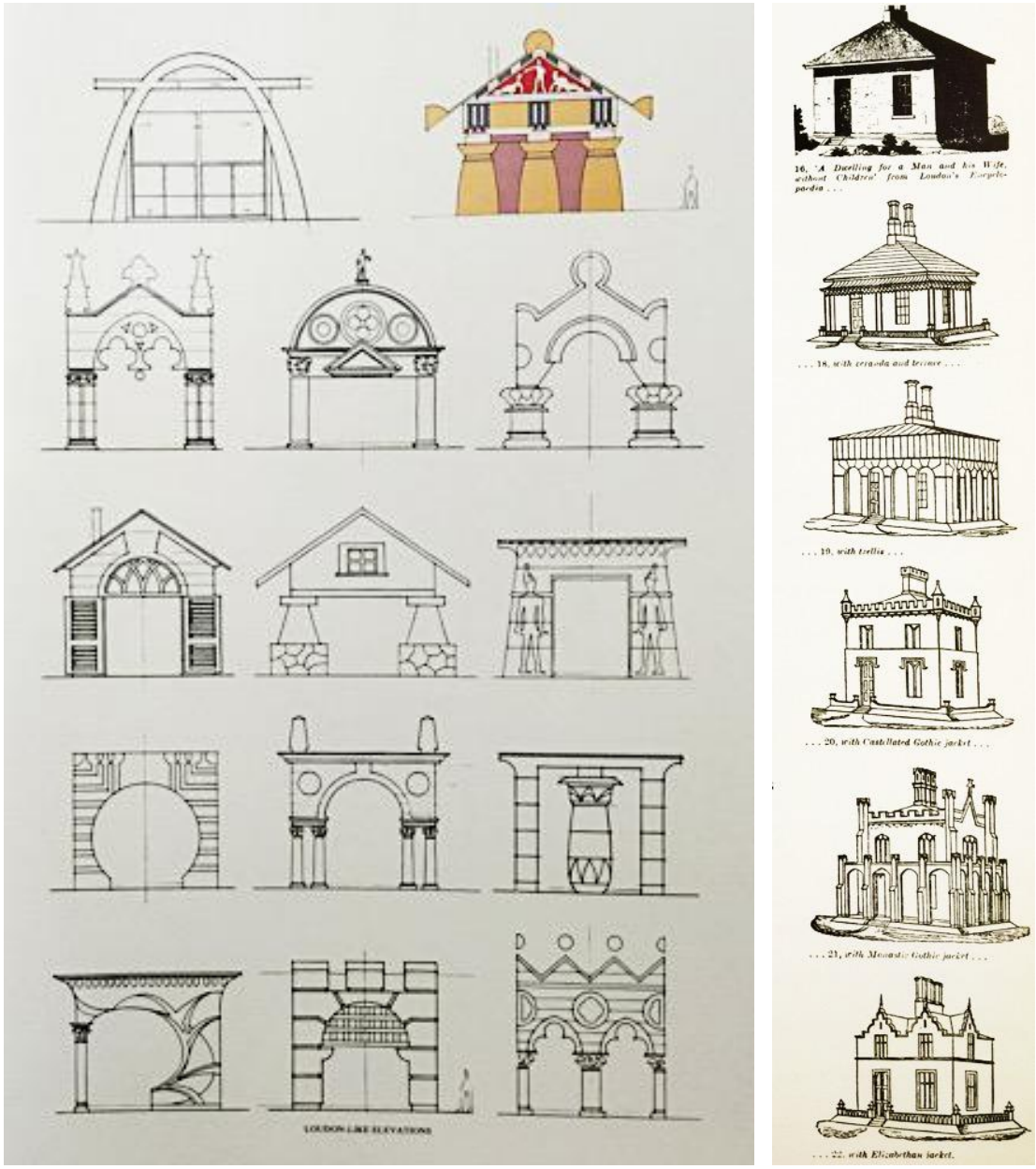


Figure 4.2 Left: Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, Eclectic House Project, 1977. The façade at the upper right corner was later used at the First Venice Architecture Biennale. Source: James Steele, *Venturi Scott Brown and Associates on Houses and Housing, Architectural Monographs 21*, 82. Right: J. C. Loudon's cottages as published in Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972, 1. (Original source: George Hersey, "J.C. Loudon and Architectural Associationism," *The Architectural Review* 144 (1968): 88–92)

[262] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in conversation with Sang Lee, "Architecture of Iconography, Representation and Convention," in *The Domestic and Foreign in Architecture,* ed. Sang Lee and Ruth Baumeister (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007): 270.

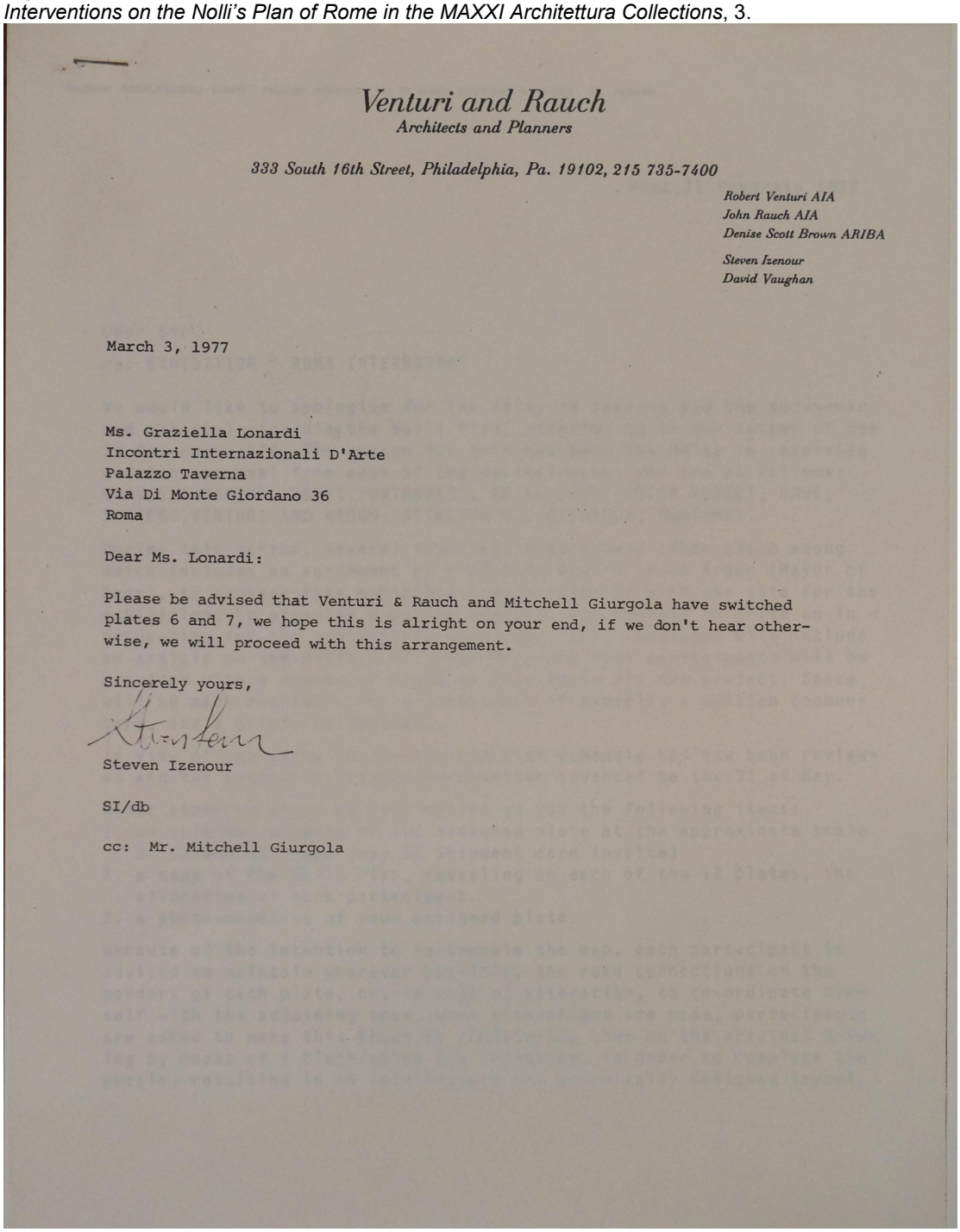
Venturi and Rauch at *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition

Venturi and Rauch's proposal for the *Roma Interrotta* (Rome Interrupted) exhibition expressed their conceptual and architectural engagement of Las Vegas with Rome in the most simple and deliberate way.[263] Venturi and Rauch were assigned the sixth sector of the map, a section that embodied portions representing the multiple characters of the city, including a thermal bath in the top left corner (Conserve d'acqua Terme Diocleziano), a dense urban fabric in the bottom right corner (with architectural elements such as Piazza S. Maria Maggiore, Chiesa patriarcale di S. M. Maggiore, Palazzo Ciampini, S. Prassede T.C. e Monastero de'Vallombrosani, Palazzo Ravenna, Palazzo Pocavena, Palazzo e Villa Gaetani), villa's towards the Aurelian city walls and vineyards outside the city walls. **(Figure 4.3)** The section's complexity was based on these diverse features of the city, although in the end, Venturi and Rauch would not design this sector of the map, swapping sectors with Romaldo Giurgola who had the seventh sector of the map showing the area outside the historical city walls juxtaposed with engravings of the city's ancient monuments. On 3 March, 1977, Steven Izenour from Venturi and Rauch's office sent a letter to the organizing committee of the *Roma Interrotta* to inform them about the switch of plates 6 and 7.[264] **(Figure 4.4)** There may be various reasons for this change. Venturi and Rauch may have not wanted to deal with the spatiality and complexity of the urban context of sector VI, or maybe they were unwilling to develop any urban planning project for the exhibition, either not to spend time on it or to avoid commenting on the urban development of this particular city. Furthermore, they simply might have wanted to work on the sector VII as this would allow them to comment on the iconographic dimension of cities, as in the case of Rome represented by Nolli through three-dimensional drawings of the city's ancient monuments.

[263] For general information about the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition, see Chapter III.

[264] Steven Izenour, "Letter to Graziella Lonardi, 3 March, 1977," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.II.G.163, (1977) Nolli (Roma Interrotta).

Figure 4.3. Giambattista Nolli's *Nuova Pianta di Roma,* Sector VI. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 3.



Venturi and Rauch
Architects and Planners

333 South 16th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102, 215 735-7400

Robert Venturi AIA
John Rauch AIA
Denise Scott Brown ARIBA
Steven Izenour
David Vaughan

March 3, 1977

Ms. Graziella Lonardi
Incontri Internazionali D'Arte
Palazzo Taverna
Via Di Monte Giordano 36
Roma

Dear Ms. Lonardi:

Please be advised that Venturi & Rauch and Mitchell Giurgola have switched plates 6 and 7, we hope this is alright on your end, if we don't hear otherwise, we will proceed with this arrangement.

Sincerely yours,

Steven Izenour

SI/db

cc: Mr. Mitchell Giurgola

Figure 4.4 Steven Izenour, "Letter to Graziella Lonardi, 3 March, 1977," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.II.G.163, (1977) Nolli (Roma Interrotta).

In the end, Venturi and Rauch designed the seventh sector of Nolli's map, located above the left bottom corner. In the bottom part of the map, Nolli introduced various ancient remains of the city to represent its historical heritage on the left (e.g. L'Anfiteatro Flavio detto il Colosseio, Arco di Settimio Severo) and its modern monuments on the right (e.g. Braccio Nuovo and Palazzo dei Conservatori of the Campidoglio, S. Giovanni in Laterano). Trajan's column, the entablature of Arco dei Pantani, and the Tre antiche Colonne Scanellate of Tempio di Giove

Statore could be found in Venturi and Rauch's sector. Rather than proposing any intervention into the city, Venturi and Rauch simply juxtaposed the sign of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas with a replica of Gian de Bologna's Rape of the Sabine Women sculpture in front. In this way, Rome's historical past was altered with the neon signs, plastic classical columns and kitsch statues of Las Vegas. In addition, they wrote on the map "The Strip Fuori le Mura" meaning "The Strip Outside the Walls," referring to the new (sub)urban conditions growing outside the historical boundaries of the city cores. **(Figure 4.5)**

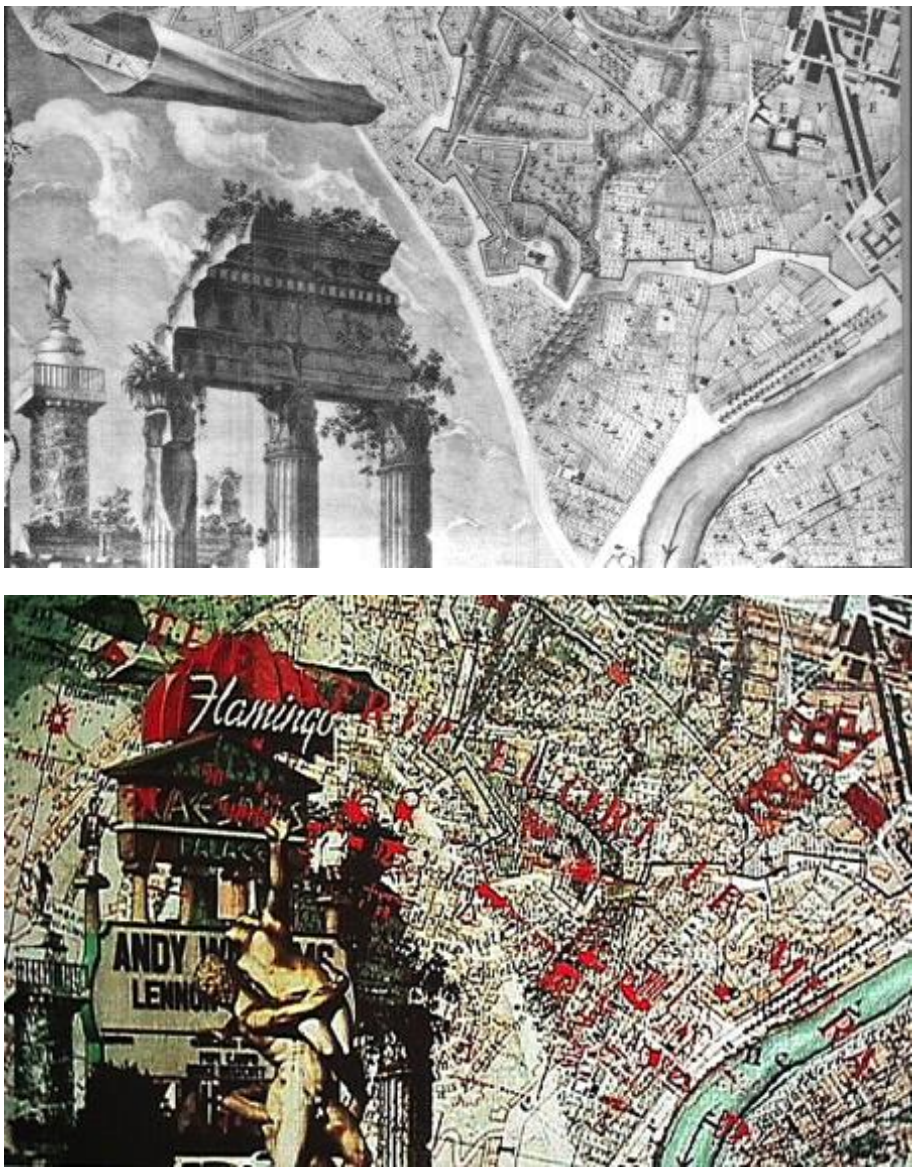
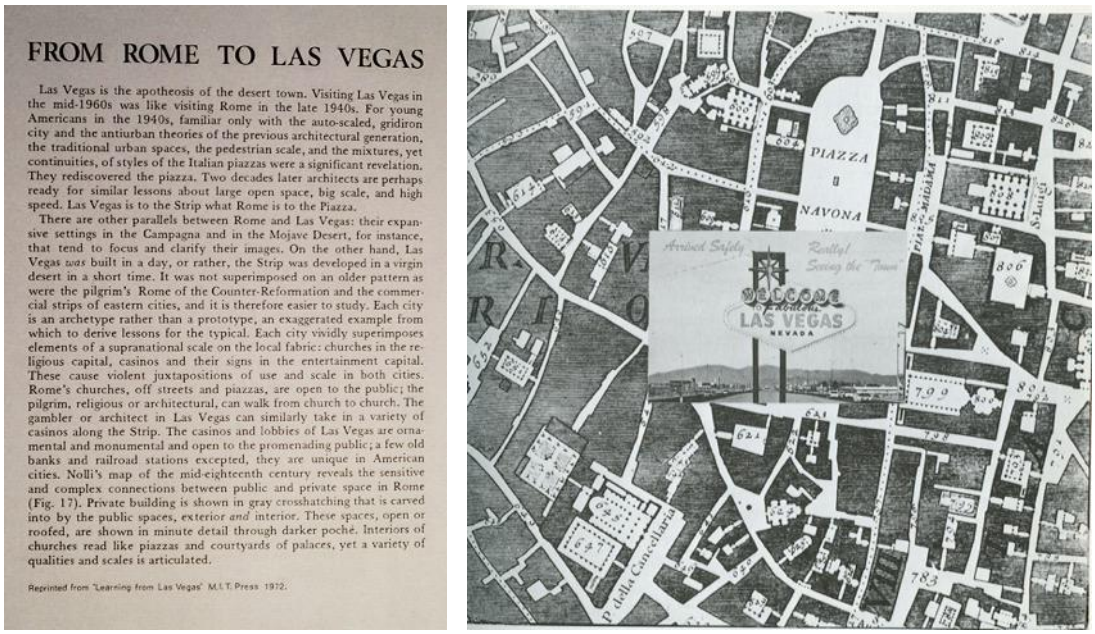


Figure 4.5. Top: Nolli's map of Rome, Sector VII. Bottom: Venturi and Rauch's Proposal for the *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 134 and http://www.quondam.com/41/4187.htm

Venturi and Rauch's message was clear, if not elaborate. They suggested Las Vegas and the commercial vernacular suburban edges of (American) cities as the new archetype of

architectural symbolism. The sign of Caesar's Palace they used in the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition was in fact published previously in *Learning from Las Vegas,* and was reprinted couple of times within the book. Venturi and Rauch also used a passage from the book titled "From Rome to Las Vegas" as the project description, making no changes on the text.[265] In this passage, Venturi and Scott Brown associated visiting Rome in the 1940s to Las Vegas in the 1960s, drawing many parallels between the two cities for lessons to be learned. In the book, they referred to the Nolli's map and added an image showing a portion from the map with the canonical "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign juxtaposed on top. **(Figure 4.6)** This expression of the Nolli's map with the Las Vegas sign and text shows how Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown were dealing with negotiating the architectural and urban expressions and lessons of these two completely distinct cities. Hence, it was a juxtaposition of their academic and intellectual acknowledgement of the virtues of the historical city of Rome and their emerging interest in popular American landscapes. In this regard, the collage of the Nolli's map published in the *Learning from Las Vegas* in 1972 was more hesitant in its language, since the juxtaposition of the two images was rather random. On the other hand, the plate prepared for the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition was more decisive in its expression, placing the Las Vegas sign on top of the illustration of the historical monuments of Rome. **(Figure 4.7)**



FROM ROME TO LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas is the apotheosis of the desert town. Visiting Las Vegas in the mid-1960s was like visiting Rome in the late 1940s. For young Americans in the 1940s, familiar only with the auto-scaled, gridiron city and the antiurban theories of the previous architectural generation, the traditional urban spaces, the pedestrian scale, and the mixtures, yet continuities, of styles of the Italian piazzas were a significant revelation. They rediscovered the piazza. Two decades later architects are perhaps ready for similar lessons about large open space, big scale, and high speed. Las Vegas is to the Strip what Rome is to the Piazza.

There are other parallels between Rome and Las Vegas: their expansive settings in the Campagna and in the Mojave Desert, for instance, that tend to focus and clarify their images. On the other hand, Las Vegas *was* built in a day, or rather, the Strip was developed in a virgin desert in a short time. It was not superimposed on an older pattern as were the pilgrim's Rome of the Counter-Reformation and the commercial strips of eastern cities, and it is therefore easier to study. Each city is an archetype rather than a prototype, an exaggerated example from which to derive lessons for the typical. Each city vividly superimposes elements of a supranational scale on the local fabric: churches in the religious capital, casinos and their signs in the entertainment capital. These cause violent juxtapositions of use and scale in both cities. Rome's churches, off streets and piazzas, are open to the public; the pilgrim, religious or architectural, can walk from church to church. The gambler or architect in Las Vegas can similarly take in a variety of casinos along the Strip. The casinos and lobbies of Las Vegas are ornamental and monumental and open to the promenading public; a few old banks and railroad stations excepted, they are unique in American cities. Nolli's map of the mid-eighteenth century reveals the sensitive and complex connections between public and private space in Rome (Fig. 17). Private building is shown in gray crosshatching that is carved into by the public spaces, exterior *and* interior. These spaces, open or roofed, are shown in minute detail through darker poché. Interiors of churches read like piazzas and courtyards of palaces, yet a variety of qualities and scales is articulated.

Reprinted from "Learning from Las Vegas" M.I.T. Press 1972.

Figure 4.6 Left: "From Rome to Las Vegas" passage reprinted from *Learning from Las Vegas* and published at the Catalogue of *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition. Right: Collage of Nolli's map illustrating the "From Rome to Las Vegas" passage and published at *Learning from Las Vegas.*

[265] This text was first introduced in the article "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas" published in 1968 at *Architectural Forum* Journal. A briefly expanded version of the text was later published at *Learning from Las Vegas* in 1972.

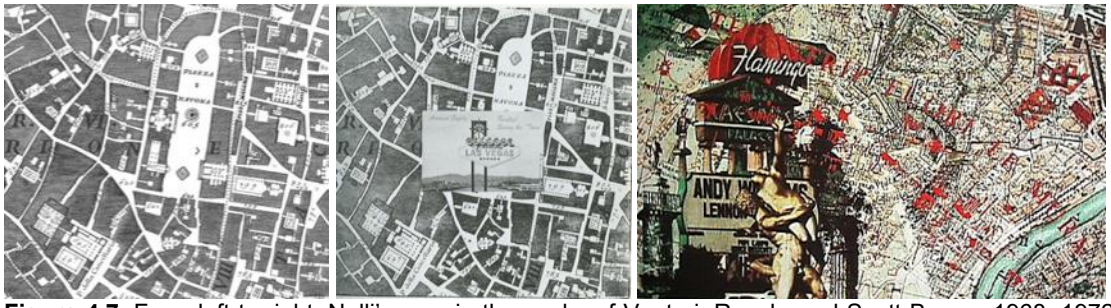


Figure 4.7. From left to right: Nolli's map in the works of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown, 1968, 1972 and 1978. Sources: "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas," 1968, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972, *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition, 1978.

Venturi and Scott Brown did not use the Nolli's map only as a conceptual representation introducing Las Vegas as a canonical condition of contemporary (American) (sub)urbanism, which is as valid as Rome as being a canon for spatial urbanism, in that they also adopted Nolli's mapping technique in their Las Vegas research studying the solid-void ratio of the strip. The result was obviously different from Rome, since the parking lots and the vast open spaces of the desert reverse substantially the ratio of void to solid. The Nolli's map, which became one of the most prevalent tools for the study of urban contexts in postmodernism, could show only the relationship between the built masses and the open spaces. As a consequence, it provided only limited information on Las Vegas, since the land-use facilities, type and intensity of uses, as well as the activity patterns, couldn't be presented. As stated by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, "It is extremely hard to suggest the atmospheric qualities of Las Vegas, because they are primarily dependent on watts, animation and iconology."[266] Hence, the Las Vegas studio sought alternative maps to represent the iconological content of the Las Vegas Strip, since Nolli's map "misses the iconological dimensions of the experience".[267] For Venturi and Scott Brown, it is through iconography that the buildings relate to their context in Las Vegas, not through the shaping of public spaces, which was the case in Rome. In an essay published same year as the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition, Venturi stated:

> We ignored iconography in architecture when we stressed the functional and structural qualities of buildings in piazzas and idealized their spatial effects, but forgot their symbolic dimensions. We learned inspiring lessons about space in Rome, but the urbanity we were seeking would come from space and signs. We had to go to Las Vegas to learn this lesson about Rome and to acknowledge symbolism in our definition of architecture.[268]

[266] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 19.

[267] Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 19.

[268] Robert Venturi, "A Definition of Architecture as Shelter with Decoration on it, and Another Pleas for a Symbolism of the Ordinary in Architecture," in *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953–1984*, ed. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 63.

In this regard, as was clearly apparent in their interpretation of Nolli's map, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown went "from Las Vegas back again to Rome" to value iconography, in addition to the spatial understanding of context, which was the main lesson of Rome.[269] **(Figure 4.8)**

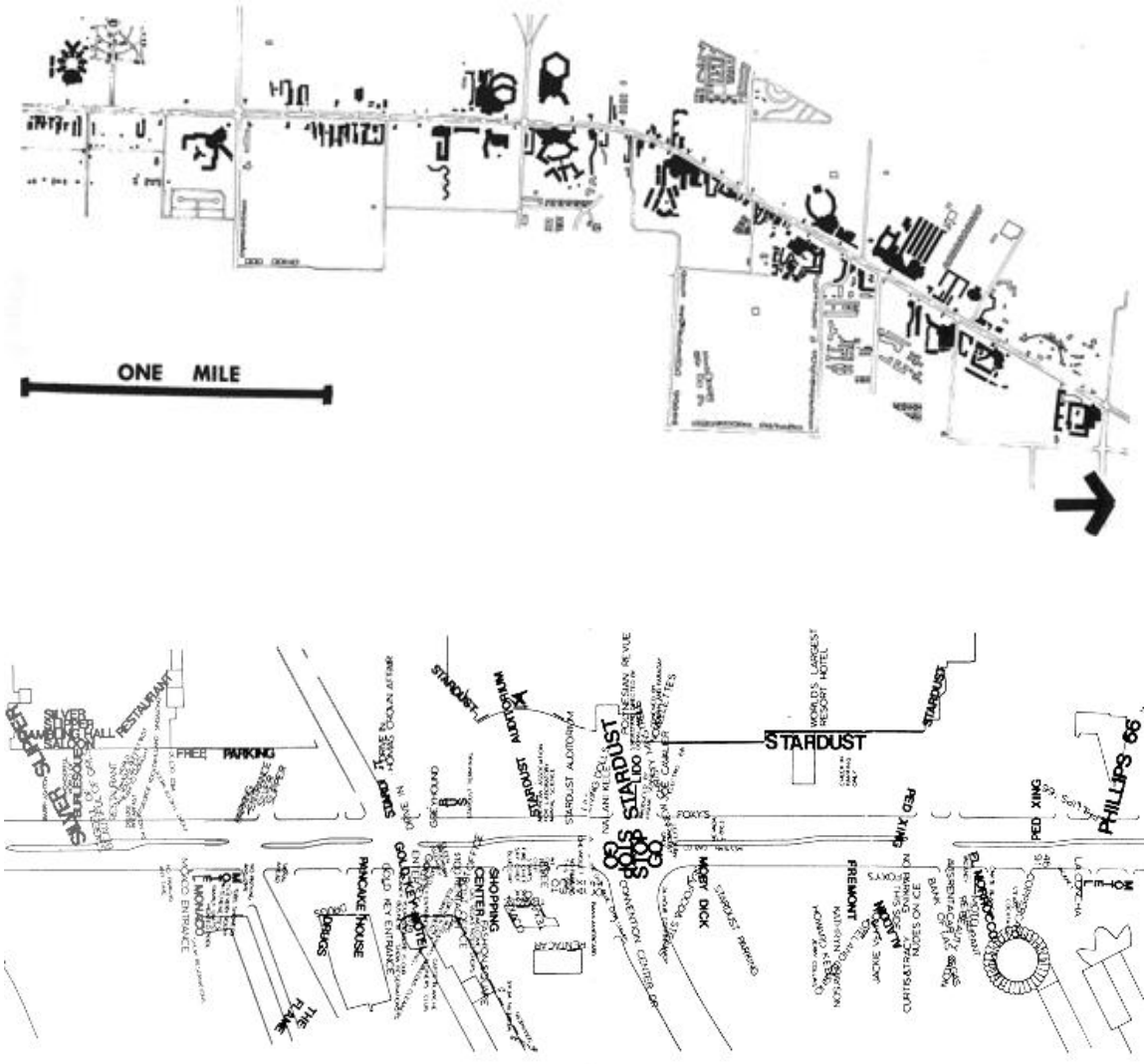


Figure 4.8 Top: Nolli map of Las Vegas. Bottom: "Map of Las Vegas Strip (detail) showing every written word seen from the road." Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, *Learning From Las Vegas,* 1977, 5, 31.

[269] Denise Scott Brown, "Invention and Tradition in the Making of American Place," in *Architecture Words 4: Having Words,* ed. Denise Scott Brown (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2009), 17.

Learning from Las Vegas

In 1968, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown published an article in the *Architectural Forum* journal entitled "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas," in which they introduced their first revelations of the architecture of the Strip.[270] The article established the theoretical framework for their subsequent studio in Las Vegas and the later publication of the book *Learning from Las Vegas*. In the article, Venturi and Scott Brown, similar to Colin Rowe's Cornell precepts of the time, criticised Modern architecture as being "utopian and puristic", and for being "dissatisfied with *existing* conditions".[271] However, different from Rowe, they shifted from the study of traditional Italian enclosed spaces to the Las Vegas Strip's antispatial characteristics, introducing "architecture as symbol" against "architecture as space" by claiming that Las Vegas' "architecture of styles and signs is antispatial; it is an architecture of communication over space".[272] In this regard, Venturi and Scott Brown aimed to reclaim iconology in architecture to create and respond to the physical and cultural context via communication. It was on this background that, together with Steven Izenour, they conducted the studio in Yale in the autumn of 1968 entitled "Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research".[273]

The aim of the studio was clear, and was expressed in the introduction to the studio brief: "An aim of this studio will be, through open minded and non-judgmental investigation, to come to understand this new form and to begin to evolve techniques for its handling".[274] **(Figure 4.9)** This new form was the "archetype of the commercial strip", and its non-judgmental investigation meant taking this new archetype as the object of study, which had been mostly ignored by architects and planners of the time. It was suggested that studying this new context would bring new dimensions to the understanding of context in architecture and urbanism, although the studio was obviously based on clear judgments, as expressed in Venturi and Scott Brown's preceding article on Las Vegas, which was compulsory reading for the students.[275] The idea was to rejuvenate the debate on symbol in architecture through the as-found elements in popular everyday environments. While this symbolism was expressed

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[270] The idea of studying Las Vegas came from Denise Scott Brown. In 1966, she invited Venturi to visit Las Vegas together while she was teaching at UCLA.

[271] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas," *Architectural Forum* 128/2 (1968): 37. See the next chapter for an extended discussion on Colin Rowe.

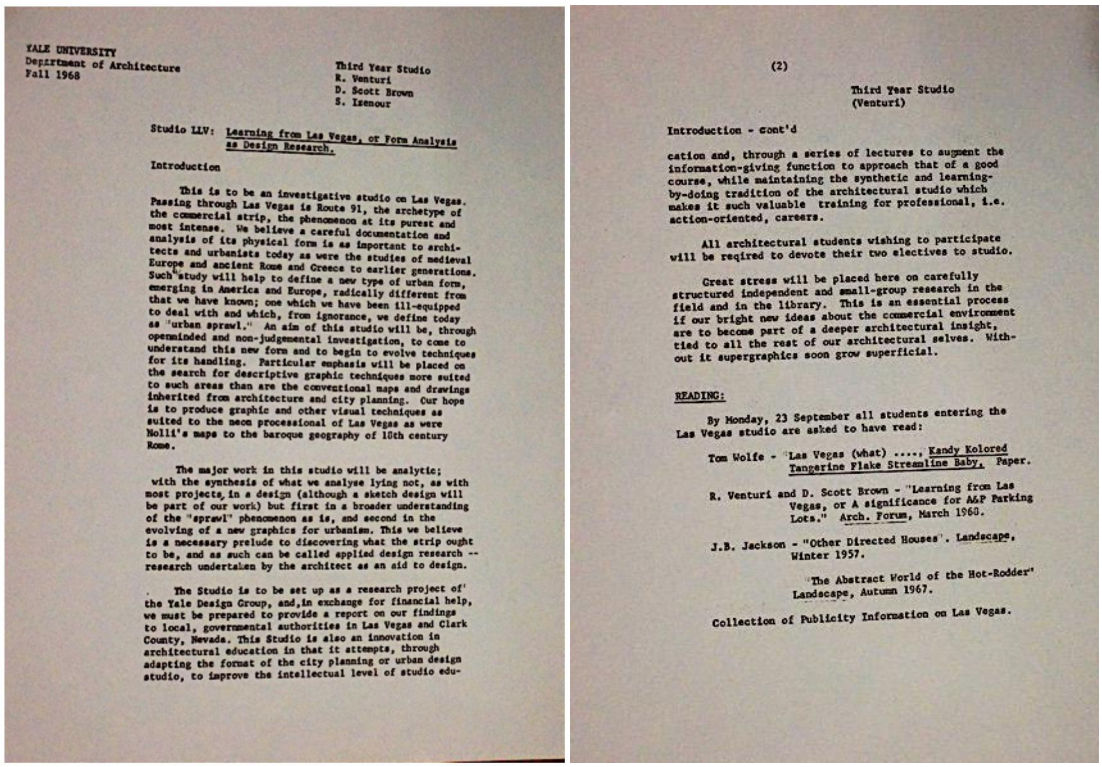
[272] Venturi and Scott Brown, "A Significance for A&P," 38.

[273] Venturi and Scott Brown were visiting professors at Yale from 1967 to 1970. During this period, they taught three influential design studios on: New York City Subways, Las Vegas, and Levittown.

[274] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "Studio LLV: Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research, Introduction," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.01, LLV Studio – Introduction.

[275] Other readings mentioned at the introduction of the studio brief were: Tom Wolfe's "Las Vegas (What?) Las Vegas (Can't hear you! Too noisy) Las Vegas!" in *Kandy Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby*, 1964; J. B. Jackson's "Other Directed Houses," *Landscape*, 1957 and J. B. Jackson's "The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder," *Landscape*, 1967.

by signs in Las Vegas, it was represented with the stylistic preferences of balustrades, doors, windows, etc. in Levittown, a suburban housing district in Philadelphia, which was the topic of the subsequent studio in Yale, presented partially in the *Signs of Life: Symbols in the American City* exhibition at the Renwick Gallery in Washington in 1976. **(Figure 4.10)**



YALE UNIVERSITY
Department of Architecture
Fall 1968

Third Year Studio
R. Venturi
D. Scott Brown
S. Izenour

Studio LLV: Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research.

Introduction

This is to be an investigative studio on Las Vegas. Passing through Las Vegas is Route 91, the archetype of the commercial strip, the phenomenon at its purest and most intense. We believe a careful documentation and analysis of its physical form is as important to architects and urbanists today as were the studies of medieval Europe and ancient Rome and Greece to earlier generations. Such study will help to define a new type of urban form, emerging in America and Europe, radically different from that we have known; one which we have been ill-equipped to deal with and which, from ignorance, we define today as "urban sprawl." An aim of this studio will be, through openminded and non-judgemental investigation, to come to understand this new form and to begin to evolve techniques for its handling. Particular emphasis will be placed on the search for descriptive graphic techniques more suited to such areas than are the conventional maps and drawings inherited from architecture and city planning. Our hope is to produce graphic and other visual techniques as suited to the neon processional of Las Vegas as were Nolli's maps to the baroque geography of 18th century Rome.

The major work in this studio will be analytic; with the synthesis of what we analyse lying not, as with most projects, in a design (although a sketch design will be part of our work) but first in a broader understanding of the "sprawl" phenomenon as is, and second in the evolving of a new graphics for urbanism. This we believe is a necessary prelude to discovering what the strip ought to be, and as such can be called applied design research -- research undertaken by the architect as an aid to design.

The Studio is to be set up as a research project of the Yale Design Group, and, in exchange for financial help, we must be prepared to provide a report on our findings to local, governmental authorities in Las Vegas and Clark County, Nevada. This Studio is also an innovation in architectural education in that it attempts, through adapting the format of the city planning or urban design studio, to improve the intellectual level of studio edu-

(2)

Third Year Studio
(Venturi)

Introduction - cont'd

cation and, through a series of lectures to augment the information-giving function to approach that of a good course, while maintaining the synthetic and learning-by-doing tradition of the architectural studio which makes it such valuable training for professional, i.e. action-oriented, careers.

All architectural students wishing to participate will be reqired to devote their two electives to studio.

Great stress will be placed here on carefully structured independent and small-group research in the field and in the library. This is an essential process if our bright new ideas about the commercial environment are to become part of a deeper architectural insight, tied to all the rest of our architectural selves. Without it supergraphics soon grow superficial.

READING:

By Monday, 23 September all students entering the Las Vegas studio are asked to have read:

Tom Wolfe - "Las Vegas (what) ....," Kandy Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby. Paper.

R. Venturi and D. Scott Brown - "Learning from Las Vegas, or A significance for A&P Parking Lots." Arch. Forum, March 1960.

J.B. Jackson - "Other Directed Houses". Landscape, Winter 1957.

"The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder" Landscape, Autumn 1967.

Collection of Publicity Information on Las Vegas.

Figure 4.9. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "Studio LLV: Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research, Introduction," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.01, LLV Studio – Introduction.

Figure 4.10. Left: Las Vegas photographed by Denise Scott Brown in 1965. Right: "Precedents of suburban symbols," Learning from Levittown studio, Yale, 1970. The latter image was also published in Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1977, 158.

Although the focus of the Las Vegas studio was on symbolism, its content was much broader. Students were asked to analyse Las Vegas in reference to 12 research topics, defined as: "Las Vegas as a pattern of activities; user behaviour; Las Vegas as a communication system; an anatomy of signs; concepts of form and space; Las Vegas image; Las Vegas light and lighting; Building types and street furniture; twin phenomena; controls; change and permanence; and graphic and other techniques of representation."[276] The diversity and the broadness of the topics offer a strong indication of how Venturi and Scott Brown were willing to widen what is important to architects by merging their interest in both architectural form and spatial planning. The list of topics show the intention in the studio to cover different layers of urbanity, from street furniture to activity patterns, and in this regard, the aim was to capture the complexity of the urban phenomenon by uncovering its various layers. Due to the limited number of students, some research topics were merged or simply discarded, such as Las Vegas image; lighting; and change, while a new one was added with the title "typography and antispace in Las Vegas".[277] The studio research was supported by readings, lectures and seminars, with the first lecture given by Venturi with the title "Meaning in Architecture," which perhaps preceded Charles Jencks and George Baird's book published with the same title in 1969. **(Figure 4.11)** While Jencks and Baird dwelled on semiology and its relevance to architecture, a popular topic of the time, Venturi was more interested in *image* than sign systems. His introductory lecture began with "three comparisons involving image" and concluded with the remark "resolution: image for the process city".[278]

Accordingly, the focus of the studio was capturing and presenting the image of Las Vegas, and for this reason, emphasis was on developing new graphic techniques. Venturi and Scott Brown clearly stated their intention in the introduction to the brief: "our hope is to produce graphic and other visual techniques as suited to the neon processional of Las Vegas as were Nolli's maps to the baroque geography of 18th century Rome".[279] So, what was the true representation of the Las Vegas phenomenon, as the archetype of popular American commercial vernacular landscapes? How could the emerging new contexts of the automobile city be searched, analysed and synthesised? Different techniques were adopted in the studio, and as discussed in the previous section, Nolli's map was used to show the awkward ratio of the solid-void relations of the desert town. Various other maps were used to show land-use patterns and the distribution of activities, although they fell short of representing either the iconographic or the spatial content of the strip. Accordingly, new techniques had to be

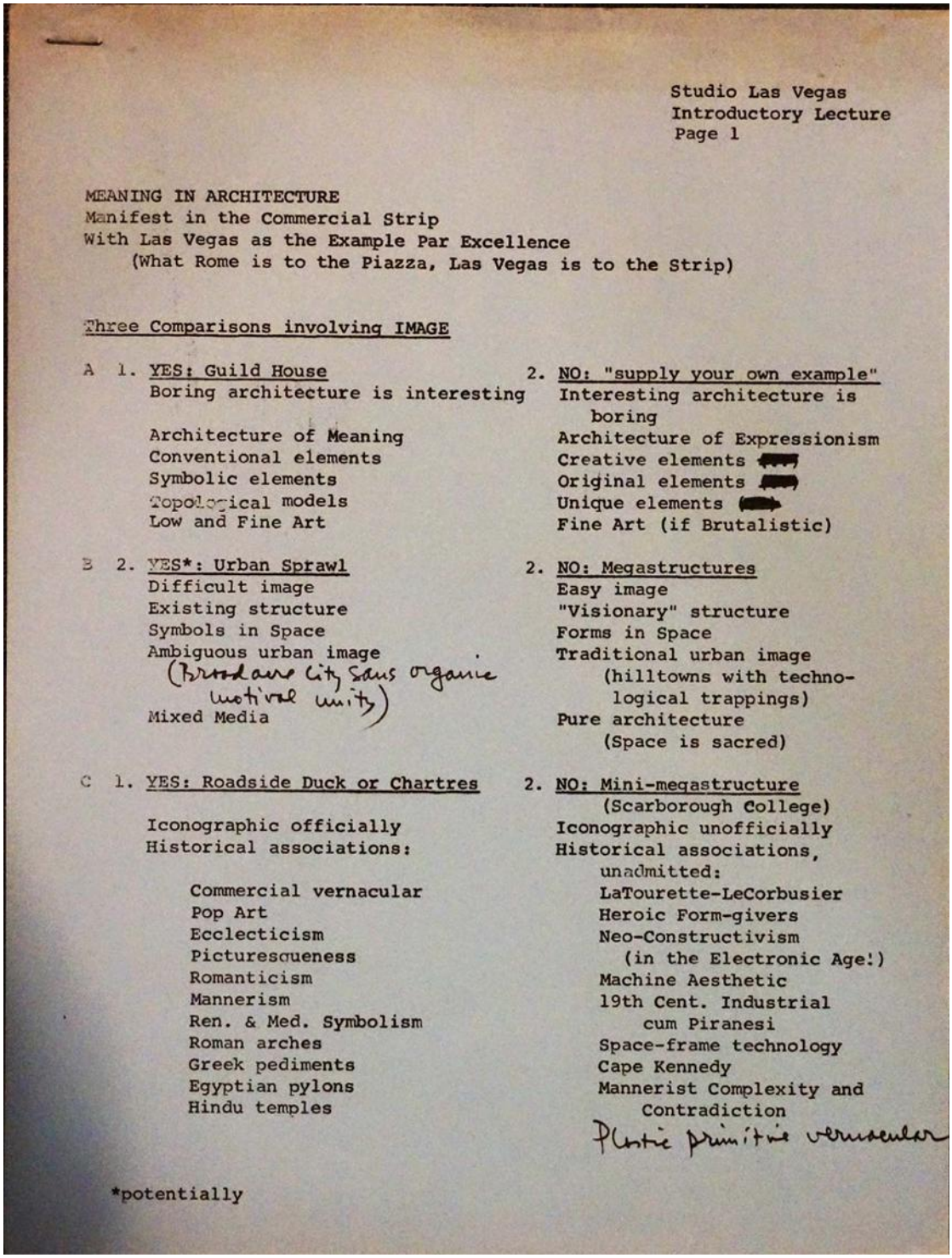
[276] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "Studio LLV: Research Topics, September 18, 1968," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.03, LLV Studio – Research Topics: Phase I Tooling Up & Phase II Library Research and Preparation.

[277] Students participating in the studio were: Ralph Carlson, Tony Farmer, John Kranz, Tony Zunino, Peter Schmitt, Dan Scully, Ron Filson, Martha Wagner, Glen Hodges, Peter Hoyt, Douglas Southworth, Charles Korn, and Peter Schlaifer.

[278] Robert Venturi, "Studio Las Vegas, Introductory Lecture: Meaning in Architecture," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.08, LLV Studio – Introductory Lecture: Meaning in Architecture.

[279] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "Introduction, Studio LLV: Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.01, LLV Studio – Introduction.

developed that could show best the architecture of the strip from the mobilised gaze, which was the most common means of experiencing it.



Studio Las Vegas
Introductory Lecture
Page 1

MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE
Manifest in the Commercial Strip
With Las Vegas as the Example Par Excellence
(What Rome is to the Piazza, Las Vegas is to the Strip)

Three Comparisons involving IMAGE

A 1.	YES: Guild House	2. NO: "supply your own example"
	Boring architecture is interesting	Interesting architecture is boring
	Architecture of Meaning	Architecture of Expressionism
	Conventional elements	Creative elements [redacted]
	Symbolic elements	Original elements [redacted]
	Topological models	Unique elements [redacted]
	Low and Fine Art	Fine Art (if Brutalistic)
B 2.	YES*: Urban Sprawl	2. NO: Megastructures
	Difficult image	Easy image
	Existing structure	"Visionary" structure
	Symbols in Space	Forms in Space
	Ambiguous urban image (Broadacre City Sans organic motival unity)	Traditional urban image (hilltowns with technological trappings)
	Mixed Media	Pure architecture (Space is sacred)
C 1.	YES: Roadside Duck or Chartres	2. NO: Mini-megastructure (Scarborough College)
	Iconographic officially	Iconographic unofficially
	Historical associations:	Historical associations, unadmitted:
	Commercial vernacular	LaTourette-LeCorbusier
	Pop Art	Heroic Form-givers
	Ecclecticism	Neo-Constructivism (in the Electronic Age!)
	Picturesqueness	Machine Aesthetic
	Romanticism	19th Cent. Industrial cum Piranesi
	Mannerism	Space-frame technology
	Ren. & Med. Symbolism	Cape Kennedy
	Roman arches	Mannerist Complexity and Contradiction
	Greek pediments	Plastic primitive vernacular
	Egyptian pylons	
	Hindu temples	

*potentially

Figure 4.11. Robert Venturi, "Studio Las Vegas, Introductory Lecture: Meaning in Architecture," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.VI.A.6905.08, LLV Studio – Introductory Lecture: Meaning in Architecture.

A rather conventional technique showing the relationship between space, speed and symbol was the drawing of its section. Comparing the strip with other commercial environments, the section drawing showed how “the sign is more important than the architecture” in Las Vegas.[280] **(Figure 4.12)** The section aimed to reveal how the ratio of sign to building had changed, from the intimate pedestrian experiences of eastern bazaars to the highway communication along the Strip. Although the section illustrated the perceptual experience of the sign and architecture, it could not represent fully its iconographic content, and because of this, photography and film were the most preferred media adopted in the studio to visualise the spatial and iconographic character of the strip “nonjudgmentally”. American artist Ed Ruscha’s deadpan photography technique was specifically influential, with his photographs of Los Angeles and Las Vegas, which were later published in *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* in 1966 and *Thirtyfour* Parking Lots in 1967, being considered very relevant for the research and the analysis of the Learning from Las Vegas studio. The studio group visited Ruscha’s atelier in Los Angeles during their trip to Las Vegas, and in the end, Ruscha’s photographic techniques would be used during the site investigations and its subsequent representations. **(Figure 4.13)**

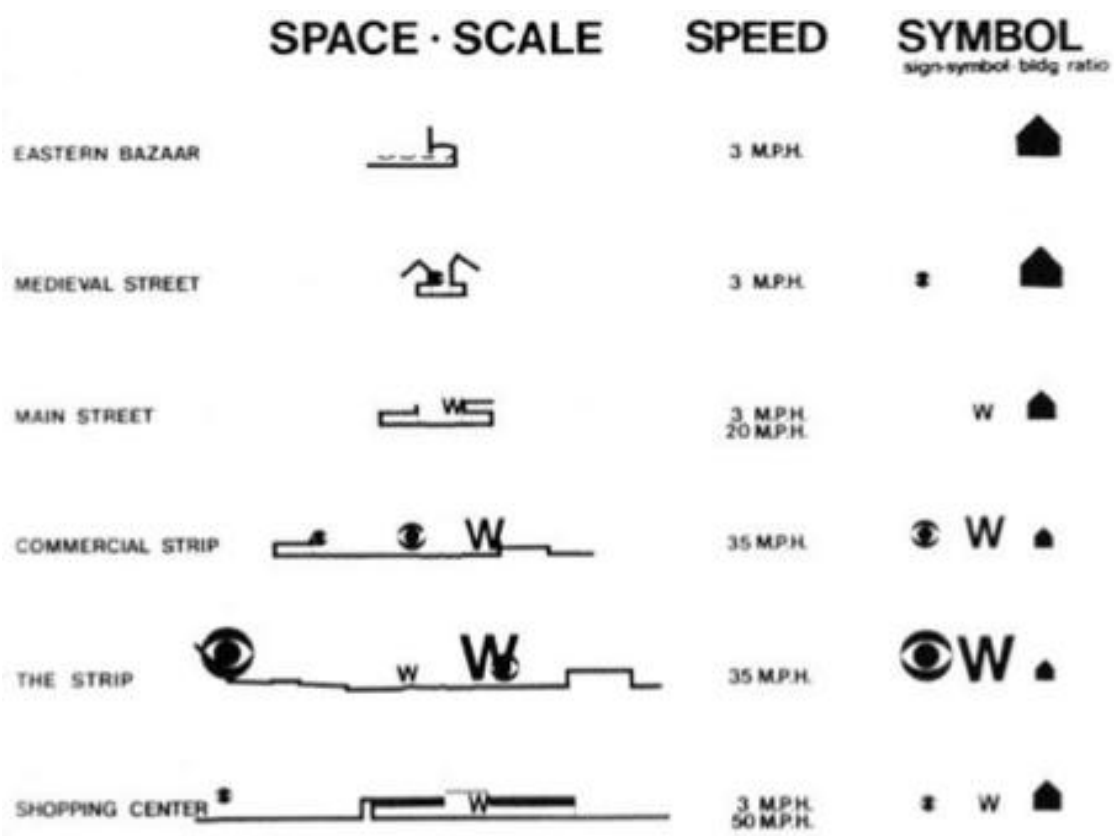


Figure 4.12. “A comparative analysis of directional space.” Source: Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1977, 11.

[280] Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 13.

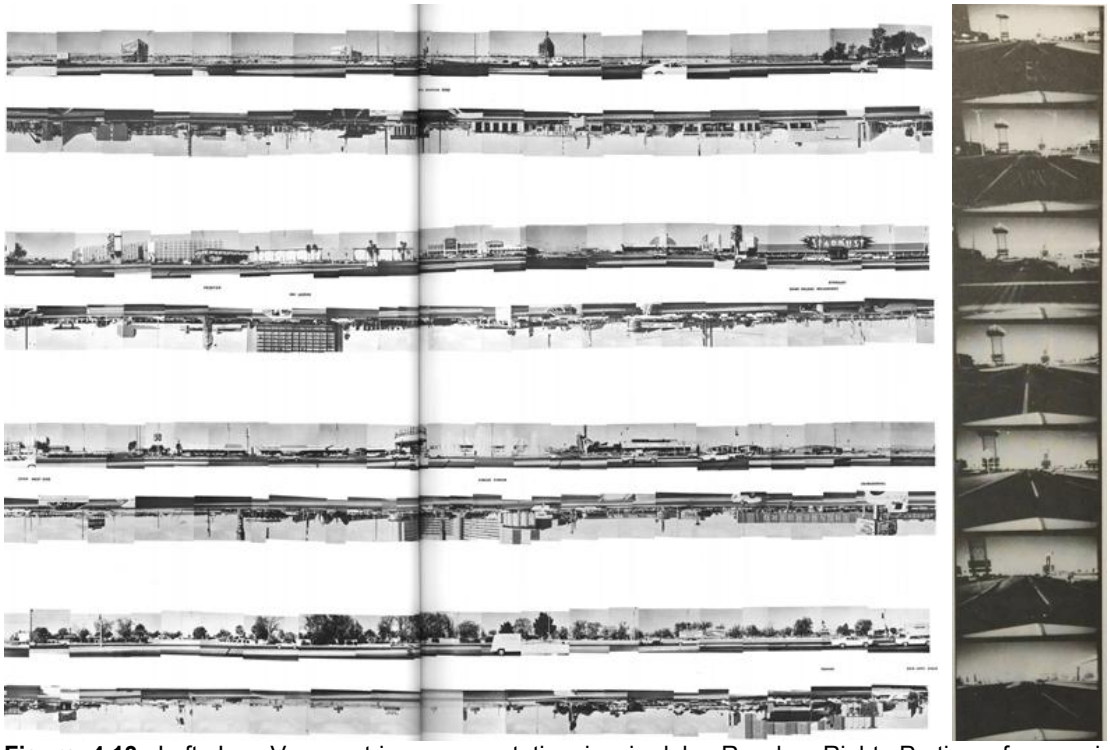
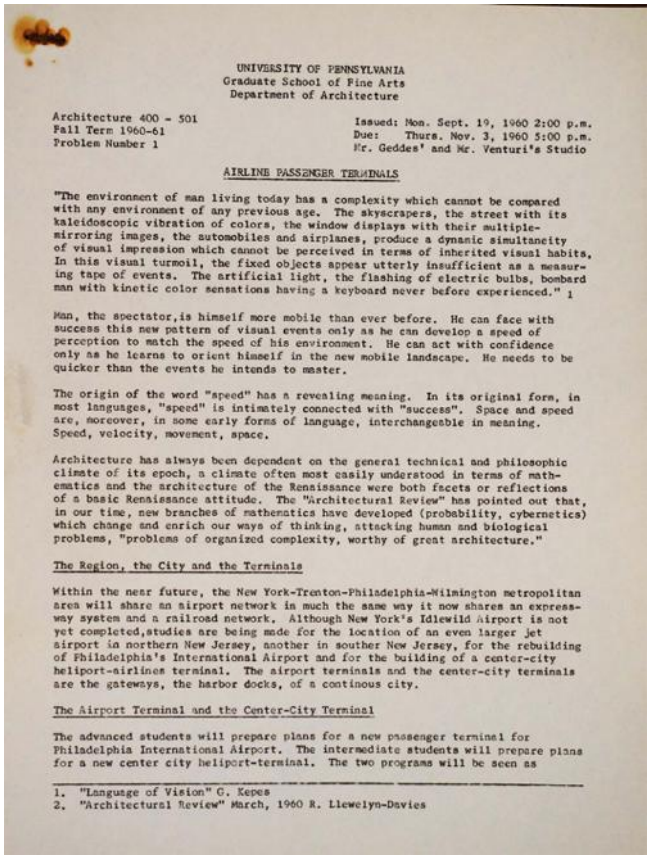


Figure 4.13. Left: Las Vegas strip, representation inspired by Ruscha. Right: Portion of a movie sequence traveling north on the Strip. Source: Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972, 28-29, 40-41.

In fact, Venturi's interest in signs and speed was already apparent in the early 1960s when he was teaching at University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). Venturi collaborated with Robert Geddes for a studio on "Airline Passenger Terminals" in the autumn of 1960, with a project brief that began with a quotation from György Kepes' *Language of Vision* mentioning the complexity of the new urban contexts and its visual perception. **(Figure 4.14)** Following Kepes' statement, Geddes and Venturi stated, "Man, the spectator, is himself more mobile than ever before. He can face with success this new pattern of visual events only as he can develop a speed of perception to match the speed of his environment. He can act with confidence only as he learns to orient himself in the new mobile landscape."[281] The students were required to study movement in relation to different transportation systems and pedestrians, with sign introduced as another dimension of the study in "lettering related to speed", which years later became a central concern in Las Vegas studies. The new spatial and visual experiences of the mobile spectators were also explored in depth by Kepes and Kevin Lynch in a research project entitled "The Perceptual Form of the City," held at MIT between 1954 and 1959. This project led eventually to the publication of Lynch's *The Image of the City* in 1960, in which he introduced imageability as a guide for architectural and urban design. In the 1950s America, the perception of the automobilised landscape took dominance over the coherent spatial experiences of pedestrian-scale European cities.

[281] Robert Geddes and Robert Venturi, "Airline Passenger Terminals, Studio Brief, Autumn Term 1960-61," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.162.2, UPenn Studio (1960-62).



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Graduate School of Fine Arts
Department of Architecture

Architecture 400 - 501
Fall Term 1960-61
Problem Number 1

Issued: Mon. Sept. 19, 1960 2:00 p.m.
Due: Thurs. Nov. 3, 1960 5:00 p.m.
Mr. Geddes' and Mr. Venturi's Studio

AIRLINE PASSENGER TERMINALS

"The environment of man living today has a complexity which cannot be compared with any environment of any previous age. The skyscrapers, the street with its kaleidoscopic vibration of colors, the window displays with their multiple-mirroring images, the automobiles and airplanes, produce a dynamic simultaneity of visual impression which cannot be perceived in terms of inherited visual habits. In this visual turmoil, the fixed objects appear utterly insufficient as a measuring tape of events. The artificial light, the flashing of electric bulbs, bombard man with kinetic color sensations having a keyboard never before experienced." 1

Man, the spectator, is himself more mobile than ever before. He can face with success this new pattern of visual events only as he can develop a speed of perception to match the speed of his environment. He can act with confidence only as he learns to orient himself in the new mobile landscape. He needs to be quicker than the events he intends to master.

The origin of the word "speed" has a revealing meaning. In its original form, in most languages, "speed" is intimately connected with "success". Space and speed are, moreover, in some early forms of language, interchangeable in meaning. Speed, velocity, movement, space.

Architecture has always been dependent on the general technical and philosophic climate of its epoch, a climate often most easily understood in terms of mathematics and the architecture of the Renaissance were both facets or reflections of a basic Renaissance attitude. The "Architectural Review" has pointed out that, in our time, new branches of mathematics have developed (probability, cybernetics) which change and enrich our ways of thinking, attacking human and biological problems, "problems of organized complexity, worthy of great architecture."

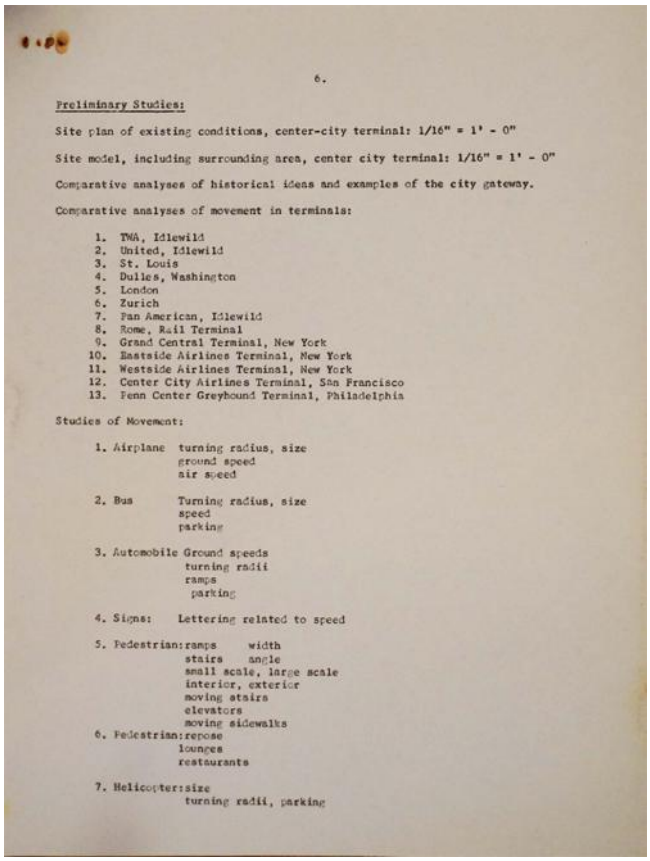
The Region, the City and the Terminals

Within the near future, the New York-Trenton-Philadelphia-Wilmington metropolitan area will share an airport network in much the same way it now shares an expressway system and a railroad network. Although New York's Idlewild Airport is not yet completed, studies are being made for the location of an even larger jet airport in northern New Jersey, another in souther New Jersey, for the rebuilding of Philadelphia's International Airport and for the building of a center-city heliport-airlines terminal. The airport terminals and the center-city terminals are the gateways, the harbor docks, of a continous city.

The Airport Terminal and the Center-City Terminal

The advanced students will prepare plans for a new passenger terminal for Philadelphia International Airport. The intermediate students will prepare plans for a new center city heliport-terminal. The two programs will be seen as

1. "Language of Vision" G. Kepes
2. "Architectural Review" March, 1960 R. Llewelyn-Davies



6.

Preliminary Studies:

Site plan of existing conditions, center-city terminal: 1/16" = 1' - 0"

Site model, including surrounding area, center city terminal: 1/16" = 1' - 0"

Comparative analyses of historical ideas and examples of the city gateway.

Comparative analyses of movement in terminals:

1. TWA, Idlewild
2. United, Idlewild
3. St. Louis
4. Dulles, Washington
5. London
6. Zurich
7. Pan American, Idlewild
8. Rome, Rail Terminal
9. Grand Central Terminal, New York
10. Eastside Airlines Terminal, New York
11. Westside Airlines Terminal, New York
12. Center City Airlines Terminal, San Francisco
13. Penn Center Greyhound Terminal, Philadelphia

Studies of Movement:

1. Airplane turning radius, size
   ground speed
   air speed
2. Bus Turning radius, size
   speed
   parking
3. Automobile Ground speeds
   turning radii
   ramps
   parking
4. Signs: Lettering related to speed
5. Pedestrian: ramps width
   stairs angle
   small scale, large scale
   interior, exterior
   moving stairs
   elevators
   moving sidewalks
6. Pedestrian: repose
   lounges
   restaurants
7. Helicopter: size
   turning radii, parking

Figure 4.14. Robert Geddes and Robert Venturi, “Airline Passenger Terminals, Studio Brief, Autumn Term 1960–61,” in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.162.2, UPenn Studio (1960-62).

A few years after the Las Vegas studio, *Learning from Las Vegas* was published as a book in 1972, with the subtitle changed to "The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form." The revised book was published in 1977 in a smaller size and with fewer images to make the book more accessible to students. The first part of the book adopted the title and the main body of the article "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas," which was published in 1968, with the addition of studio materials and notes. The synthesis of the overall research was presented in the second part of the book under the heading "Ugly and Ordinary Architecture, or the Decorated Shed." Here, Venturi and Scott Brown introduced the controversy between what they called the duck, "buildings as symbol", and the decorated shed, "building with applied symbols". **(Figure 4.15)** According to them, the signs of Las Vegas Strip can teach architects the significance of symbol over space and communication over form *again*. Venturi and Scott Brown approached the strip as a perceptual phenomenon, as also asserted by Martino Stierli in his extensive study of the book, in which he stated "*Learning from Las Vegas* regards the Strip phenomenologically as a problem of perception."[282] However the "decorated shed" privileged the iconographic content of Las Vegas over the spatial-perceptual one by proposing architecture as a box devoid of spatial elaboration. Venturi and Scott Brown's didactic model proposed the design of a façade as a billboard, a skin accommodating signs and symbols, and a building as a basic shelter responding to functional needs.[283] In this regard, the decorated shed is suggested to understand and engage with context, not as a spatial phenomenon experienced through perception, but as a matter of communication conducted through iconography. As Stanislaus von Moos stated, from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* to *Learning from Las Vegas,* "the interest has shifted from an aesthetic and psychological perspective to a basically linguistic one",[284] and the shift between these two seminal books was triggered by the growing interest in Pop Art and everyday popular landscapes in the early 1960s.

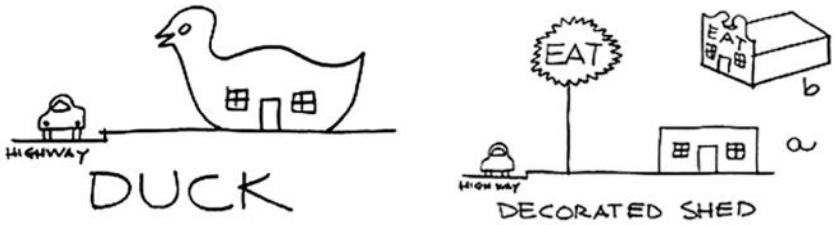


Figure 4.15. Duck and the Decorated Shed. Source: Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1977, 88-89.

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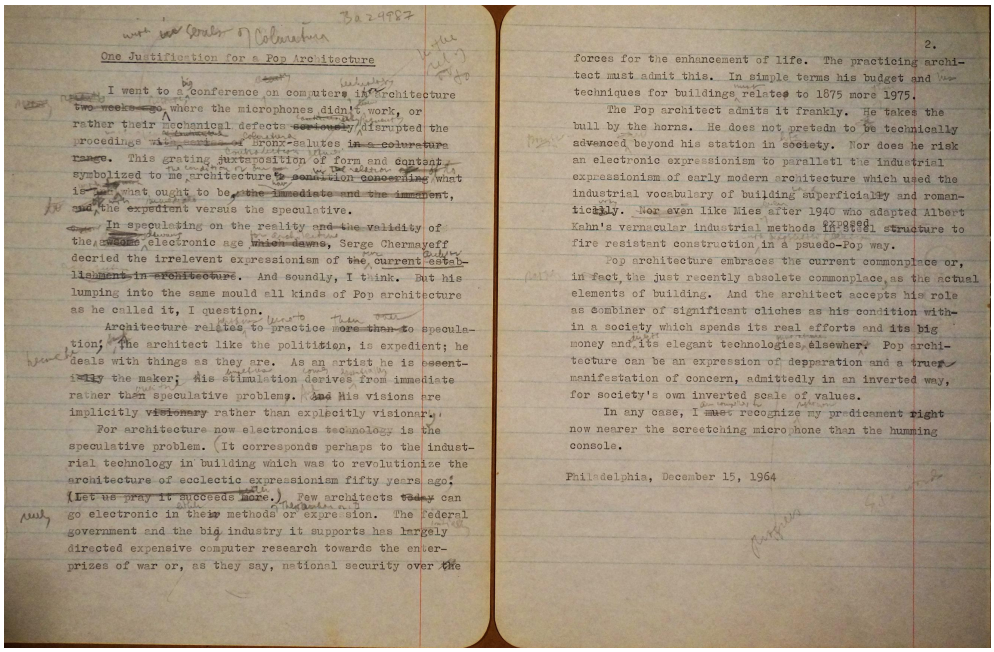
[282] Martino Stierli, *Las Vegas in the Rearview Mirror: The City in Theory, Photography, and Film* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013).

[283] Karin Theunissen, in her article "Flows from Early Modernism into the Interior Streets of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown" claimed that in their designs, firm introduced interior streets in-between the screen façade and the bulk of the buildings to relate buildings to their contexts by directing space according to the existing movement patterns. This model of the "Decorated Shed with Interior Street," as Theunissen called, is in fact seen mostly in firms' projects that mainly cover social activities such as Trabant University Student Center. Scott Brown explained the reason for designing a broad interior space behind the façades of public buildings as enabling the crowd standing and waiting in front to fit when they enter. Denise Scott Brown interviewed by Esin Komez Daglioglu, Philadelphia, 10 May, 2015.

[284] Stanislaus von Moos, *Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown: Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizoli International Publications, 1987), 16.

Intermezzo: Pop vs. Critical Architecture



One Justification for a Pop Architecture

I went to a conference on computers in architecture two weeks ago where the microphones didn't work, or rather their mechanical defects seriously disrupted the proceedings with cries of bronx-salutes in a coloratura range. This grating juxtaposition of form and content symbolized to me architecture's confusion concerning what is and what ought to be, the immediate and the imminent, and the expedient versus the speculative.

In speculating on the reality and the validity of the cybernetic electronic age which dawns, Serge Chermayeff decried the irrelevent expressionism of the current establishment in architecture. And soundly, I think. But his lumping into the same mould all kinds of Pop architecture as he called it, I question.

Architecture relates to practice more than to speculation; the architect like the politician, is expedient; he deals with things as they are. As an artist he is essentially the maker; his stimulation derives from immediate rather than speculative problems. And his visions are implicitly visionary rather than explicitly visionary.

For architecture now electronics technology is the speculative problem. It corresponds perhaps to the industrial technology in building which was to revolutionize the architecture of eclectic expressionism fifty years ago. (Let us pray it succeeds more.) Few architects today can go electronic in their methods or expression. The Federal government and the big industry it supports has largely directed expensive computer research towards the enterprizes of war or, as they say, national security over the

2.

forces for the enhancement of life. The practicing architect must admit this. In simple terms his budget and techniques for buildings relates to 1875 more 1975.

The Pop architect admits it frankly. He takes the bull by the horns. He does not pretedn to be technically advenced beyond his station in society. Nor does he risk an electronic expressionism to paralletl the industrial expressionism of early modern architecture which used the industrial vocabulary of building superficially and romantically. Nor even like Mies after 1940 who adapted Albert Kahn's vernacular industrial methods in steel structure to fire resistant construction in a psuedo-Pop way.

Pop architecture embraces the current commonplace or, in fact, the just recently absolete commonplace, as the actual elements of building. And the architect accepts his role as combiner of significant cliches as his condition within a society which spends its real efforts and its big money and its elegant technologies elsewhere. Pop architecture can be an expression of desperation and a truer manifestation of concern, admittedly in an inverted way, for society's own inverted scale of values.

In any case, I must recognize my predicament right now nearer the screetching microphone than the humming console.

Philadelphia, December 15, 1964

Figure 4.16. Venturi's "A Justification for a Pop Architecture" manuscript dating 15 December, 1964 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.114, "One Justification for Pop Architecture".

One of the first instances of Venturi's reference to Pop Architecture is found in his article "A Justification for Pop Architecture," written in 1964 and published in 1965. **(Figure 4.16)** As the article lets on, Venturi was justifying pop architecture not (only) for aesthetic but (also) for economic reasons. According to Venturi, pop architecture expresses the values of its society, which he criticised for directing its money and technology elsewhere, such as the arms industry.[285] Indeed, this was a turbulent time in the Unites States. Following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson became president on 22 November, 1963. Comparable to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal era, Johnson marked a set of programmes for the Great Society addressing poverty, education, civil rights, environmental concerns, medical care, etc. Heralded as the peak of modern liberalism in the United States, Johnson's programme, however, failed to fulfil its social promises, and consequentially faced opposition from leftists, hippies and the anti-war movement.[286] During the early years of Johnson's presidency, the Vietnam War (in Vietnamese *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ*, Resistance War against

[285] Robert Venturi, "A Justification for a Pop Architecture," *Arts and Architecture* 82 (1965): 22.

[286] Allen J. Matusow argued that the history of liberalism's rise and fall in the Unites States had three parts: "Beginning with the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960, Part I traces the conversion of his administration to liberal programs and the emergence of a national consensus in favor of their enactment. In Part II the liberals win resounding endorsement with the landslide election of Lyndon B. Johnson, pass more laws, and then suffer disappointment as the high hopes invested in reform fail of fulfillment. Part III examines the great uprising against liberalism in the decade's waning years by hippies, new leftists, black nationalists, and the antiwar movement – an uprising that convulsed the nation and assured the repudiation of the Democrats in the 1968 election." Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), xx.

America) escalated following the Gulf of Tonkin incident on 2 August, 1964 and the resulting Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that gave unilateral power to the president for large-scale military operations in Vietnam. In the end, “Vietnam divided America more deeply and painfully than any event since the civil war.”[287]

It was in this context that Venturi wrote his “Pop Architecture” essay, in which he announced the fact that he simply accepted the conditions and aesthetics of society and its economic regimes as a practicing architect. Although never stated explicitly, this social and political climate caused a division among US architects, theoreticians and critics. Complying with the existing social and political orders was signalling or even expressing a gap between Venturi and other well-known American fellows. His article “A Justification for Pop Architecture” was announcing the first crack, and was in fact written a few months after Venturi received a letter from Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves and Thomas Vreeland inviting him to join a meeting at Princeton. **(Figure 4.17)** Sent to today’s most well-known American scholars and architects, including Stanford Anderson, Kenneth Frampton, Richard Meier, Colin Rowe and Vincent Scully, the letter was addressing the “lack of critical apparatus for discussion of issues crucial to the development of a future architecture”.[288] Venturi attended the first meeting in Princeton and disputed the invitation letter, arguing that the problem of young architects was not the lack of a critical apparatus, but rather not having enough work. Venturi later expressed his discomfort with the aim and position of the organisation by sending a letter stating, “we are architects, not evangelists … Our future architecture will come from words with works, not words without works”.[289] Consequentially, he withdrew from the organisation, which would later be renamed the “Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment” (CASE).[290] It is no surprise that Eisenman, the protagonist of the organisation, would later generate the autonomy debate in architecture that argued that critical architecture should be achieved through the internal logics of the form generation process. In other words, form kept free from the so-called external forces of politics, social patterns, economic dimensions, etc.

On the other hand, “external” forces had a prominent role in Denise Scott Brown’s pedagogy and practice, which long influenced Venturi’s architectural thinking after their collaboration in the early 1960s. In 1960, Scott Brown started to teach at UPenn and began to develop a pedagogy that could help urban design students to understand, interpret and use the

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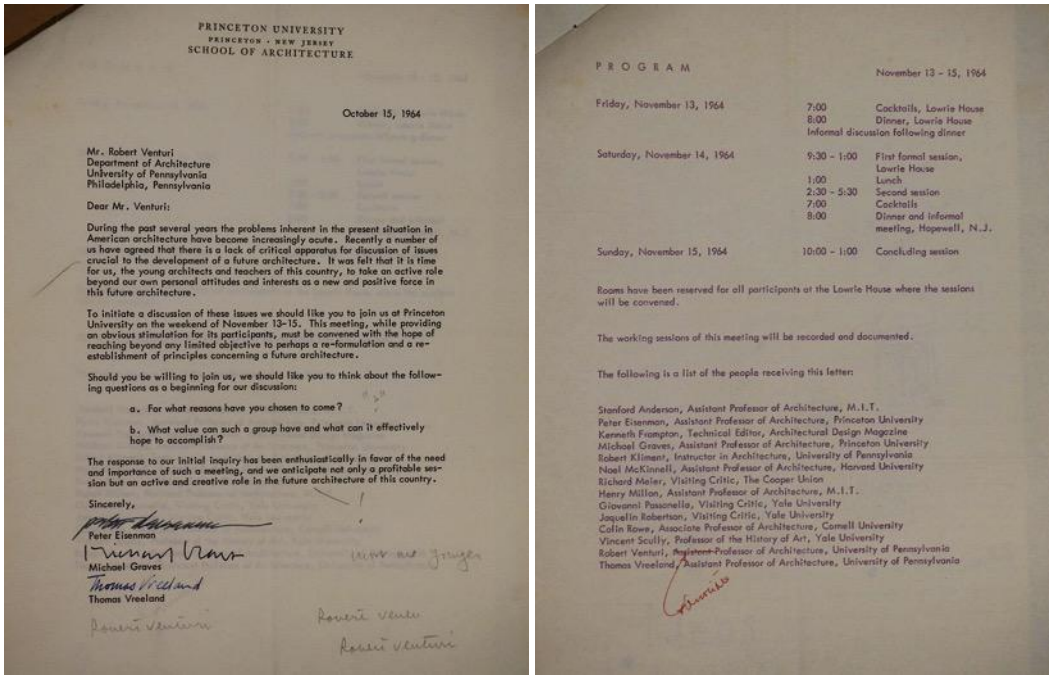
[287] Brian VanDeMark, *Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xiii.

[288] Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Thomas Vreeland, “Letter to Robert Venturi, 15 October, 1964,” in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.115, Princeton Conference (1964).

[289] Robert Venturi, “Untitled manuscript, 15 January, 1965,” in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.115, Princeton Conference (1964).

[290] For further information on CASE, see: Stanford O. Anderson, “CASE and MIT Engagement,” in *A Second Modernism: MIT, Architecture and the 'Techno-Social' Moment,* ed. Arindam Dutta, 578–651 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013). A recent conference titled “Revisiting CASE” was also held on 2 May, 2015 at MIT with the participation of some CASE members including Stanford Anderson, Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, Robert Kliment, Donlyn Lyndon, Michael McKinnell, Henry (Hank) Millon, and Thomas (Tim) Vreeland.

doctrines of social sciences in their own way. She called her studio “Form, Forces, Functions”, with an underlying assertion that “the form of the city owes as much to forces within the natural environment, society, and its technology as it does to ‘functions’ as architects define them.”[291] During this period, she also attempted to write a book entitled *Determinants of Urban Form*, although it would never be realised due to a lack of funding. Scott Brown invited Venturi to her urban design studios, where her interest in American Main Street and Pop art were prevalent. Her teaching was in fact a reflection of her master’s education at the planning department of UPenn, which increased her interested on the everyday life and social praxis. She claimed that the urban sociology course of Herbert Gans taught her how to be non-judgmental while David Crane showed her the city’s ability to communicate through the symbolism of its form.[292]



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON • NEW JERSEY
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

October 15, 1964

Mr. Robert Venturi
Department of Architecture
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Venturi:

During the past several years the problems inherent in the present situation in American architecture have become increasingly acute. Recently a number of us have agreed that there is a lack of critical apparatus for discussion of issues crucial to the development of a future architecture. It was felt that it is time for us, the young architects and teachers of this country, to take an active role beyond our own personal attitudes and interests as a new and positive force in this future architecture.

To initiate a discussion of these issues we should like you to join us at Princeton University on the weekend of November 13-15. This meeting, while providing an obvious stimulation for its participants, must be convened with the hope of reaching beyond any limited objective to perhaps a re-formulation and a re-establishment of principles concerning a future architecture.

Should you be willing to join us, we should like you to think about the following questions as a beginning for our discussion:

a. For what reasons have you chosen to come?

b. What value can such a group have and what can it effectively hope to accomplish?

The response to our initial inquiry has been enthusiastically in favor of the need and importance of such a meeting, and we anticipate not only a profitable session but an active and creative role in the future architecture of this country.

Sincerely,

Peter Eisenman
Michael Graves
Thomas Vreeland
Thomas Vreeland

Robert Venturi
Robert Venturi

PROGRAM — November 13 - 15, 1964

Friday, November 13, 1964	7:00	Cocktails, Lowrie House
	8:00	Dinner, Lowrie House
		Informal discussion following dinner
Saturday, November 14, 1964	9:30 - 1:00	First formal session, Lowrie House
	1:00	Lunch
	2:30 - 5:30	Second session
	7:00	Cocktails
	8:00	Dinner and informal meeting, Hopewell, N.J.
Sunday, November 15, 1964	10:00 - 1:00	Concluding session

Rooms have been reserved for all participants at the Lowrie House where the sessions will be convened.

The working sessions of this meeting will be recorded and documented.

The following is a list of the people receiving this letter:

Stanford Anderson, Assistant Professor of Architecture, M.I.T.
Peter Eisenman, Assistant Professor of Architecture, Princeton University
Kenneth Frampton, Technical Editor, Architectural Design Magazine
Michael Graves, Assistant Professor of Architecture, Princeton University
Robert Klimert, Instructor in Architecture, University of Pennsylvania
Noel McKinnell, Assistant Professor of Architecture, Harvard University
Richard Meier, Visiting Critic, The Cooper Union
Henry Millon, Assistant Professor of Architecture, M.I.T.
Giovanni Pasanella, Visiting Critic, Yale University
Jaquelin Robertson, Visiting Critic, Yale University
Colin Rowe, Associate Professor of Architecture, Cornell University
Vincent Scully, Professor of the History of Art, Yale University
Robert Venturi, Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania
Thomas Vreeland, Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania

Figure 4.17 Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Thomas Vreeland, “Letter to Robert Venturi, 15 October, 1964,” in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.115, Princeton Conference (1964).

Scott Brown claimed that her interest in the existing environments, everyday life and pop culture stemmed also from her childhood experiences and her architectural education. Born in 1931 in Zambia, she grew up in South Africa where, she argued, here education taught her to look *nonjudgmentally* at the surrounding colonial landscape.[293] She would photograph

[291] Denise Scott Brown, “On Formal Analysis as Design Research,” in *Architecture Words 4: Having Words,* ed. Denise Scott Brown (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2009), 72.

[292] Denise Scott Brown, “Some Ideas and Their History,” in *Architecture as Signs and Systems for a Mannerist Time,* ed. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 105–119.

[293] To explain this, she referred to Olive Schreiner’s book *The Story of an African Farm*, which according to her invented the African landscape, showing it first time to audiences in South Africa and England. Denise Scott Brown, “Invention and Tradition,” 5–21.

everyday landscapes and popular culture in South Africa before it became a research tool at Las Vegas study. In 1952, during her fourth year of architectural education in South Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand, Scott Brown travelled to London for an internship, and stayed there to complete her architectural education at the Architectural Association, where she engaged with the cultural and intellectual context of the post-war England. It was there that she became acquainted with the precursors of the Pop Art movement in Britain, the Independent Group, and its architect members Alison and Peter Smithson. There, Scott Brown became acquainted with socioplastics, the notion generated by the Smithsons referring to "the relationship between the built form and social practice".[294] The Smithsons' Urban Re-identification Grid, dating back to 1953, was one of the precursors of "learning from" study in investigating the social and spatial patterns of London's most ordinary neighbourhoods, Benthal Green. It was the Smithsons who advised Scott Brown to study at UPenn, where Louis Kahn was teaching.[295] **(Figure 4.18)**

Figure 4.18. Peter and Alison Smithson. Urban Re-Identification Grid, 1953. Source: https://relationalthought.wordpress.com/2012/01/18/129/

For Scott Brown, architecture was not (only) a formal but (also) a social praxis. In her article "Team 10, Perspecta 10, and The Present State of Architectural Theory" published in 1967, she reviewed two groups of "socially-minded architects" who considered urban features and social forces in their studies, rather than the ignorance of complexity of modern architects.[296] The first of these was the New Brutalism of Team 10, which turned towards mass culture and the architecture of the street as a backlash to utilitarian total planning, and the second was an American Group of individuals that included Venturi, Moore, Giurgola and Kahn, whose opinions were published at *Perspecta* 10 in 1965. These "socially-minded architects," many of whom were later named the "Grays", were seeking ways of engaging with the site, user expectations and the patterns of everyday life. The Grays opposed the Whites, many of who were members of the CASE group, for their autonomous distanced practice, and their

[294] Tom Avermaete, "A Web of Research on Socio-Plastics: Team 10 and the Critical Framing of Everyday Urban Environments," in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching Design Research,* ed. Reto Geiser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 114.

[295] Scott Brown went to the planning department of UPenn to study under Louis Kahn. Although Scott Brown was surprised when she learnt that Kahn was not teaching in the planning department, she stayed on to gain an urban planning education, which according to her was a must for a good architect. Denise Scott Brown, "Some Ideas and Their History."

[296] Denise Scott Brown, "Team 10, Perspecta 10, and the Present State of Architectural Theory," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 33/1 (1967): 42–50.

indifference to physical, social and cultural contexts, and in this regard, Scott Brown's article was quite an early source within the contextual vs. autonomy debate. Scott Brown's notion of "socially-minded architects" should be read also against the background of the debates between the social planners versus "architecture-trained physical planner, particularly the urban designer".[297] American cities in the 1960s witnessed vast urban renewal projects, which were criticized by many theoreticians, practitioners and activists such as Jane Jacobs. Philadelphia was also a target for urban renewal projects and saw many riots in protest against them in the 1960s. Scott Brown had this to say on those years: "Riots in cities were the backdrop to Penn's passionate debates. And as I rolled with the punches, challenged and profoundly intrigued by the social planners, Bob Venturi seemed to be the only architect on the faculty who understood the issues."[298]

In the end, Venturi and Scott Brown aimed to distinguish themselves from their American colleagues by turning towards popular culture, and consequently, adopting pop art techniques.[299] Influenced by the use of found objects by pop artists for the creation of new contexts, Venturi and Scott Brown's contextualism departed from that of their contemporaries, looking at and learning from popular everyday landscapes. In her article "Learning from Pop", published in 1971, Scott Brown defined two main reasons for looking at pop culture and landscape: "sensitivity to needs" and "to find formal vocabularies for today which are more relevant to peoples".[300] Similar to the use of existing imagery from popular culture by pop artists, Scott Brown asserted that existing social and cultural patterns could inform the architectural design process. Going against orthodox modernism and its complete disregard for context with a *tabula rasa* approach, she called for a form of architectural design that complied with any reality, regardless of its ugliness. Lara Schrijver, analysing the radical critiques of the modernist architecture in the 1960s including the works of Venturi and Scott Brown in her book *Radical Games: Popping the Bubble of 1960s' Architecture*, argued that their pop approach is inclusive for simply aiming at "an accommodation of a society in which visual information was increasingly present" and radical for being "not about legitimacy but about experiment, not about conventional aesthetics but about crossing traditional boundaries."[301] However, the straightforward inclusion of the aesthetics of a society was not found radical by many architectural critics at the time such as Kenneth Frampton who criticised the approach of designing through "what is already there" for reproducing the poor

[297] Denise Scott Brown, "Towards an Active Socioplastics," in *Architecture Words 4: Having Words*, ed. Denise Scott Brown (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2009), 32.

[298] Denise Scott Brown, "Towards an Active Socioplastics," 35.

[299] However, as Michiel Riedijk argued, bridging the gap between surface and space has proven to be more difficult in Venturi's pop architecture than it is in painting and sculpture as was for instance beautifully managed in Robert Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim*. Michiel Riedijk, "Giant Blue Shirt at the Gasoline Station: Pop Art, Colour, and Composition in the Work of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown," in *Colour in Contemporary Architecture*, ed. Susanne Komossa, Kees Rouw and Joost Hillen (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2009), 170.

[300] Denise Scott Brown, "Learning From Pop," *Casabella* 359–360 (1971): 15.

[301] Lara Schrijver, *Radical Games: Popping the Bubble of 1960s' Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 149, 197.

qualities of existing built environments.[302] As their Las Vegas study showed, Scott Brown and Venturi in the end suggested using representational pop images of classical elements to reflect the taste culture of the *populus.* This engagement of classical architectural forms with popular taste cultures in fact revealed the contiguity of the ideas of Scott Brown and Venturi, or Mrs Force and Mr Form, as Charles Jencks put it in 1969.[303] In fact, his representational over spatial, and symbolism over form denoted a shift in the career of Venturi. Scott Brown stated "I 'corrupted' him (as he says) by inviting him to visit Las Vegas in 1966."[304] Venturi's early years have to be revisited if one is to understand this "corruption".

Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture

In the introduction to Robert Venturi's seminal book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* published in 1966, Vincent Scully claimed the book to be "probably the most important writing on the making of architecture since Le Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture*, of 1923". While pointing to the shift of references between Le Corbusier and Venturi, he said:

> Le Corbusier's great teacher was the Greek temple, with its isolated body white and free in the landscape, its luminous austerities clear in the sun … Venturi's primary inspiration would seem to have come from the Greek temple's historical and archetypical opposite, the urban façades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life: not primarily sculptural actors in vast landscapes but complex spatial containers and definers of streets and squares.[305]

Hence, façade was a significant element for Venturi even before "the decorated shed", given his criticism of orthodox modern architecture's free-standing buildings, its dictum of design from the inside out, and its antipathy to the "false front". In *Complexity and Contradiction*, Venturi returned to the values of traditional architectural and the urban elements of the streets, squares and façades, which, after almost 15 years, had become the main driving force behind the first Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980. Affinities were not limited to that. In the preface to the book, Venturi quoted T.S. Eliot: "the historical sense involves perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence",[306] an expression that also later inspired the title and the theme of the First Venice Architecture Biennale.

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[302] Kenneth Frampton, "America 1960–1970 Notes on Urban Images and Theory," *Casabella* 359-60 (1971): 24–38.

[303] Charles Jencks, "Points of View," *Architectural Design* December (1969): 644.

[304] Denise Scott Brown, preface to *Architecture as Signs and Systems for a Mannerist Time,* by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), ix.

[305] Vincent Scully, introduction to *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, by Robert Venturi (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 9.

[306] Robert Venturi, preface to *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, by Robert Venturi (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 13.

Although Venturi's interest in false façades was apparent prior to the *Learning from Las Vegas* study, his focus was not solely on its symbolic associations, but also on its formal and spatial capabilities. In the preface to the second edition of the book written in 1977, Venturi stated: "I now wish the title had been *Complexity and Contradiction in Architectural Form,* as suggested by Donald Drew Egbert … But in hindsight this book on form in architecture complements our focus on symbolism in architecture several years later in *Learning from Las Vegas*." As clearly suggested by Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction* was not about symbolism in architecture, but rather architectural form, discussed from a spatial compositional point of view. In his funding application to the Graham Foundation in 1962, Venturi explained his project of *Complexity and Contradiction* as "a point of view about architecture; one which considers the essential spatial meaning of building over the technological function which is today's emphasis. I have tentatively referred to this series of ideas as reconciliation in spatial composition."[307] Venturi's admiration of spatial composition came from his admiration and experiences of the architecture and urbanism of Rome.

After working with Oscar Stonorov and Eero Saarinen, and after graduating from Princeton in the early 1950s, Venturi was eager to go to Europe, specifically to Rome due to his admiration of its Baroque architecture and its spatial ambiguity. Accepted in his third application, Venturi went Rome in 1954 to live and study in the American Academy of Rome for two years, and during his stay, he travelled extensively through Europe (in addition to Italy, France and Germany, he also visited Greece, Turkey and Egypt) and became involved in the Italian architectural discourse of the time.[308] In this regard, the Grand Tour, a long-lasting European tradition to go to Italy, mainly to Rome, to study art and architecture, also become an influential intellectual context for Venturi. Grand Tour, a kind of scholar's pilgrimage, is definitely one of the reasons to position Rome as origin or an everlasting model – though interrupted with the International Style – for Western architecture and urbanism. Venturi's Roman experience, rather than dwelling on iconography or symbolism, focused rather on the spatial complexities of historical, specifically Baroque, architecture. As acknowledged by Venturi himself later in a speech given in 1993 for the centennial of the American Academy in Rome, the focus of his experiment in Rome was "first civic Space" and "second, Baroque architecture – but not in terms of its form or symbol – not as style – but in terms of its complex and dynamic Space within its urban context".[309]

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[307] Robert Venturi, "Letter to Graham Foundation, 15 February, 1962," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.125, Graham Foundation, Grant Application and Resume (1962).

[308] For further information on Venturi's stay in the American Academy in Rome, see: Martino Stierli, "In the Academy's Garden: Robert Venturi, the Grand Tour and the Revision of Modern Architecture," *AA Files* 56 (2007): 42–55.

[309] Robert Venturi, "Notes For a Lecture Celebrating the Centennial of the American Academy in Rome Delivered in Chicago," in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, ed. Robert Venturi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 50.

Venturi began teaching at UPenn as an instructor and was an assistant to Louis Kahn in 1957 after returning from his time in the American Academy in Rome. Venturi's application to the Graham Foundation was accepted and he wrote the book between 1962–64 while teaching the "Theories of Architecture Course" at UPenn, and also practicing architecture with his own office.[310] **(Figure 4.19)** In fact, *Complexity and Contradiction* was on the whole developed from Venturi's teaching materials in the course. As described by Venturi himself, the course "consists of architectural analysis and historical comparison, employed as tools of criticism and as techniques in the architect's design process … contemporary and historical examples are compared non-chronologically".[311] The idea was simply to achieve abstract principles for architectural design through a study of precedents and identifying their elements. Robert Venturi, admiring his former instructor Donald Drew Egbert's history course at Princeton, was aiming to enhance the link between history and design through this theory course. In this way, learning from architectural precedents and their design principles became a method of rehabilitating the link with past that had been broken by the Modern Movement.[312] In the course curriculum, Venturi divided architecture into Vitruvian elements of utilitas, firmitas and venustas, and their further hierarchies such as site, background; mechanical equipment; light, space, movement; unity, balance, rhythm; etc. Each week of the course was dedicated to lectures on these topics given by Venturi. **(Figure 4.20)**

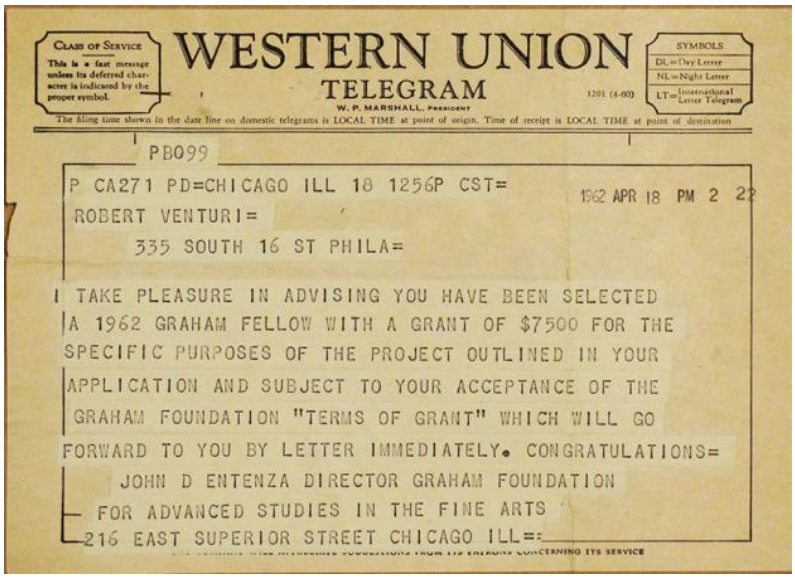

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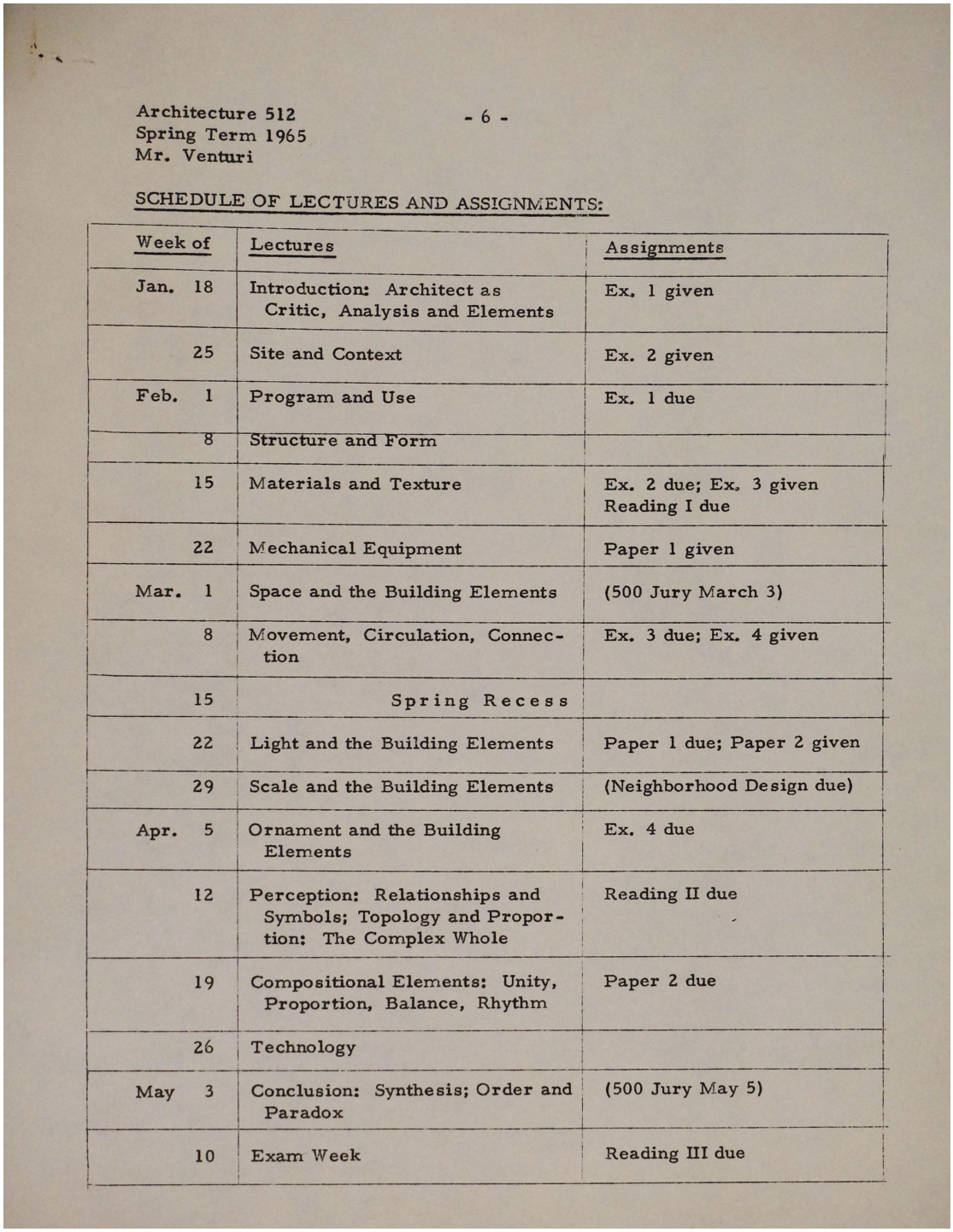
Figure 4.19. Telegram sent by the Graham Foundation to Venturi informing him of his acceptance as a grant fellow for writing the *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 18 April, 1962 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.125, Graham Foundation, Grant Application and Resume (1962).

[310] In 1958, Venturi began his own practice with Cope and Lippincott, then in 1961 he became partners with William Short, and finally in 1964 he established his own firm with John Rauch, to be joined by Denise Scott Brown a couple of years later.

[311] Robert Venturi, "Theory and Elements of Architecture, Course Description," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.116, Article General.

[312] In fact, Colin Rowe adopted a similar method in his design studios, using a comparative analysis of precedents in his various publications, with "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" being the most pretentious.



Architecture 512 - 6 -
Spring Term 1965
Mr. Venturi

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Week of	Lectures	Assignments
Jan. 18	Introduction: Architect as Critic, Analysis and Elements	Ex. 1 given
25	Site and Context	Ex. 2 given
Feb. 1	Program and Use	Ex. 1 due
8	Structure and Form	
15	Materials and Texture	Ex. 2 due; Ex. 3 given Reading I due
22	Mechanical Equipment	Paper 1 given
Mar. 1	Space and the Building Elements	(500 Jury March 3)
8	Movement, Circulation, Connection	Ex. 3 due; Ex. 4 given
15	Spring Recess	
22	Light and the Building Elements	Paper 1 due; Paper 2 given
29	Scale and the Building Elements	(Neighborhood Design due)
Apr. 5	Ornament and the Building Elements	Ex. 4 due
12	Perception: Relationships and Symbols; Topology and Proportion: The Complex Whole	Reading II due
19	Compositional Elements: Unity, Proportion, Balance, Rhythm	Paper 2 due
26	Technology	
May 3	Conclusion: Synthesis; Order and Paradox	(500 Jury May 5)
10	Exam Week	Reading III due

Figure 4.20. Outline of Venturi's "Theories of Architecture" Course at UPenn in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.187, ARCH 512 – Lecture I: Introduction: Criticism; Analysis and Comparison; Hierarchies of Elements; Definitions; Method (1/18/1965).

According to Scott Brown, this was the first theory course given in schools of architecture in the United States. Upon completing her master's education in the planning department of UPenn, Scott Brown started teaching in the same department, and it was while there that she met Venturi in 1960 at a faculty meeting. Later on, she collaborated with Venturi, giving seminars in the theory course between 1962 and 1964. During this period, Scott Brown was

teaching a studio on 40th Street, a commercial strip in West Philadelphia. Inspired by Scott Brown's studio, Venturi asked in *Complexity and Contradiction* "Is not Main Street almost all right? Indeed, is not the commercial strip of a route 66 almost all right?"[313] In this sentence, which has been interpreted as the precursor to the Las Vegas study, Venturi acknowledges explicitly signs for containing and communicating more meaning than the easy unity of urban fragments. The final theoretical part of the book on the "difficult whole" ends with the statement "And it is perhaps from the everyday landscape, vulgar and disdained, that we can draw the complex and contradictory order that is valid and vital for our architecture as an urbanistic whole", ascribing the yet to be developed researches on everyday cultural contexts.[314] However, overall, Venturi's interest in the book and his understanding of "the difficult whole" was about the spatial formal complexity of architecture rather than the patterns of everyday popular landscapes and their symbolism.

In his Graham Foundation application, Venturi defined his book project "Complexity and Contradiction" in the following terms, "… at the least general level it would become and exercise through analysis and comparison, to clarify my own directions as an artist and teacher: a sort of manifesto for myself."[315] He began the book with "a gentle manifesto" entitled "nonstraightforward architecture", in which he referred to "T. S. Eliot's analysis of 'difficult' poetry and Joseph Albers' definition of the paradoxical quality of painting" as approaches in other fields acknowledging complexity and contradiction.[316] Mentioning Albers in the first paragraph of the book, Venturi was referring implicitly to his emphasis on the perceptual and spatial understanding of art and architecture, as associated with Gestalt psychology in those periods. Albers was a German artist and teacher who was a student and later a professor at Bauhaus. Between 1930 and 1931, Albers attended Karlfried Graf von Dürkheim's lectures on Gestalt psychology at Bauhaus, and these would have a great impact in his studies in the United States after 1933.[317] The theoretical part of Venturi's book ended with a section on "the obligation towards the difficult whole", which was followed by the final part of the book featuring Venturi's projects. In this regard, the "difficult whole" can be seen as the synthesis of Venturi's arguments in the book, and in this section, Venturi referenced Gestalt psychology explicitly in his discussion of the characteristics of the perceptual whole.

The "Difficult whole" was the underlying theme of the book, referring to a spatial-perceptual whole achieved by the difficult formal unity of fragments. Venturi's emphasis was not on the iconographic or symbolic content of architecture, but on its formal-spatial unity. He proposed an inclusive "both-and" architecture against orthodox modern architecture's "either-or"

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[313] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 102.

[314] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 104.

[315] Venturi, "Letter to Graham Foundation."

[316] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 16.

[317] Geert-Jan Boudewijnse, "Gestalt Theory and Bauhaus–A Correspondence," *Gestalt Theory*, 34/1 (2012): 82.

tendency, showing how contradictory relations of parts to the whole create formal and spatial complexity. The scale of his examples varied from entrances to buildings (i.e. Lutyens' entrance gallery at Middleton Park, where a succession of columns and arches create a directional space, terminating at a blank wall) to the domes of churches (i.e. the form of the Latin cross plan of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, which does not match the form of its ceiling, denoting a distorted circular plan), from vestigial elements (i.e. suspended arches at the Soane House Museum, which are not structural but spatial, and serve to divide the space) to civic buildings (i.e. Bruges's cloth hall building, which relates to its immediate physical context through its proportion to the square in front while its oversize tower relates to the town as a whole).[318] **(Figure 4.21)**

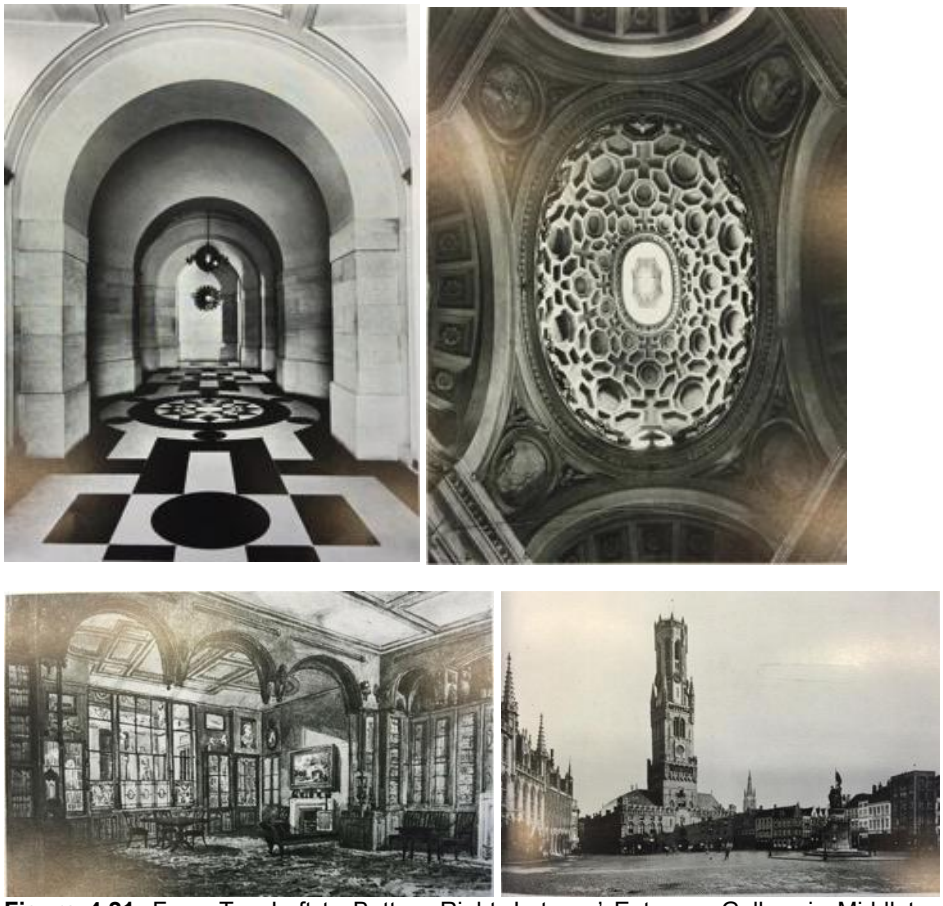

Figure 4.21. From Top Left to Bottom Right: Lutyens' Entrance Gallery in Middleton Park, Dome of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Soane House Museum and Cloth Hall of Bruge. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 24–33.

Venturi's emphasis on spatiality became much more explicit in his discussion of "the inside and the outside", not only in referring to the relationship of a building with its site, but also spaces within other spaces and elements juxtaposed onto other elements. His focus was on the spatial layeredness created at different scales with the different compositional elements.

[318] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 23–33.

Venturi referred first to the contradiction between the envelope and the interior organisations, such as in the case of Villa Savoye or Hadrian's Villa Theatre in Tivoli. Here, the architecture of the container and the contained are in contrast with each other, and according to Venturi, this inside/outside contradiction may sometimes create "an additional space between the lining and the exterior wall", which he showed through the plan diagrams.[319] Spatial layeredness is not only about the zone between the interior and the exterior, as Venturi suggested that a juxtaposition of different architectural elements can also create *spatial layers,* as exemplified in "disengaged pilasters in the anteroom of Syon House" or in Soane's "juxtaposition of domes and lanterns, squinches and pendentives, and a variety of other ornamental and structural shapes".[320] In the end, Venturi referred to the creation of an "urban whole" by responding to the "contradictory interplays between inside and outside spatial needs".[321] Venturi showed through diagrams and example projects how the façades of a building can change in respect to the "exterior spatial reasons". **(Figure 4.22)**

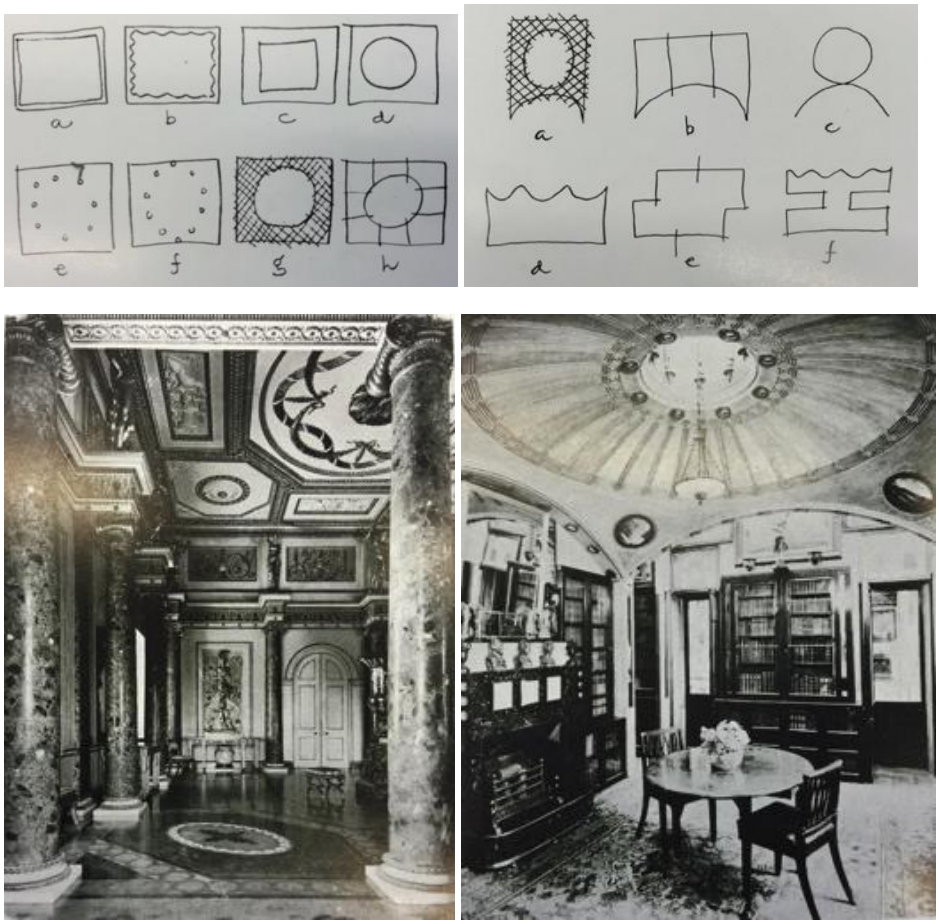

Figure 4.22. From Top Left to Bottom Right: Plan Diagrams, Façade Diagrams, Syon House and Soane House and Museum. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 74-85.

[319] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 74.

[320] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 74–77.

[321] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 84.

Venturi was critical of Le Corbusier's call for the design of buildings "from within to without", like a soap bubble, blown from inside to make a homogenous shell outside.[322] Venturi stated:

> Architecture occurs at the meeting of interior and exterior forces of use and space. These interior and environmental forces are both general and particular, generic and circumstantial. Architecture as the wall between the inside and outside becomes the spatial record of this resolution and its drama. And by recognizing the difference between the inside and the outside, architecture opens the door once again to an urbanistic point of view.[323]

This expresses Venturi's understanding of context in a subtle way. According to him, contextual architecture is an urbanistic one that accommodates the specific and circumstantial conditions of their particular settings. The idea is to create "the difficult whole" by accommodating order, but also by distorting conventions according to circumstantial exigencies. Venturi compared Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation in Marseille with Aalto's apartment building in Bremen. Aalto distorted Le Corbusier's apartment's rectangular plan to give the dwelling units a better view and access to southern light, while Venturi addressed light, view, surrounding buildings, characteristics of streets, use patterns, etc. as external spatial dimensions of the context. **(Figure 4.23)** This, however, does not mean that Venturi defined context as extrinsic to architectural design. His definition of context was rather intrinsic, in that he focused on the spatial tensions created between the inside and outside, and the architectural and urban.

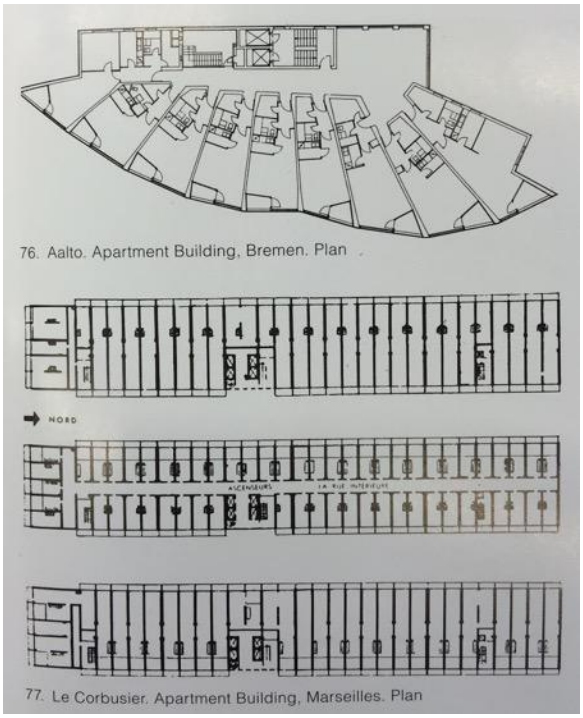

Figure 4.23. Aalto's Apartment Building in Bremen at the Top and Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation in Marseille at the Bottom. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 51.

[322] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York, BN Publishing, 2008), 181.

[323] Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 86.

The move from emphasis on architectural form and its spatial perception in *Complexity and Contradiction* to the symbolism and its communication with iconography in *Learning from Las Vegas* was most apparent in the two architectural projects Venturi designed during the 1960s. While writing *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1962–64, Venturi was also extremely busy designing his mother's house, Vanna Venturi House, which was an architectural manifestation of the ideas discussed in the book in terms of its spatial contradictions, ambiguity and layeredness. Expressing the book's main argument, the house embodied a spatial complexity that was devoid of any iconographic, decorative or stylistic reference, aside from the fact that it resembles a "children's drawing of a house". In this regard, it was not a decorated shed, since the façade was not a thin skin and the interior was not a generic box. The façade was designed as a spatial layered zone, an in-between space, accommodating the interior and exterior forces, **(Figure 4.24)** and the interior organisation also had a spatial complexity, with different heights and ceiling forms, diagonal walls and unexpected light sources. On the other hand, Venturi's Bill-ding Board project, which was designed for the National College Football Hall of Fame Competition in 1967, is the most explicit manifestation of "architecture as sign".

Designed after Venturi and Scott Brown's visit to Las Vegas, the Bill-ding Board project was presented to the wider audience in the *Architectural Forum* journal following the issue containing the "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas." The project was characterised by its front façade, articulated as an oversised billboard attached to a hangar like building. **(Figure 4.25)** In describing the project, Venturi stated, "space, form, and structure, *the* traditional architectural elements mean little in the vast parking spaces that are the context of this building and most other buildings that architecture can't force into their megastructural fantasies".[324] Venturi claimed, as learned from Las Vegas, that the new context of American cities demanded direct communication in architecture over spatial-formal complexity. Consequentially, Vanna Venturi House's spatial, deep, layered front façade evolved into a billboard, an extremely thin surface that communicates literally to engage with its context.[325] In the end, Venturi prioritised iconography over spatial, symbolism over form, and direct communication over "the difficult whole". The lessons learned from historical precedents faded away after the lessons of the everyday popular environments. In fact, the spatial context, historical precedents and the idea of the "difficult whole" resided deeply in Venturi's student years.

[324] Robert Venturi, "A Bill-Ding-Board Involving Movies, Relics and Space," *Architectural Forum* 128/3 (1968): 76.

[325] Referring to the thickness of the decoration in Baroque and Rococo architecture, Scott Brown claimed that their design of skin as a very thin surface is a modern approach. Denise Scott Brown interviewed by Esin Komez Daglioglu, Philadelphia, 10 May, 2015.

Figure 4.24. Vanna Venturi House**.** Photographs by the Author, 13 May, 2015.

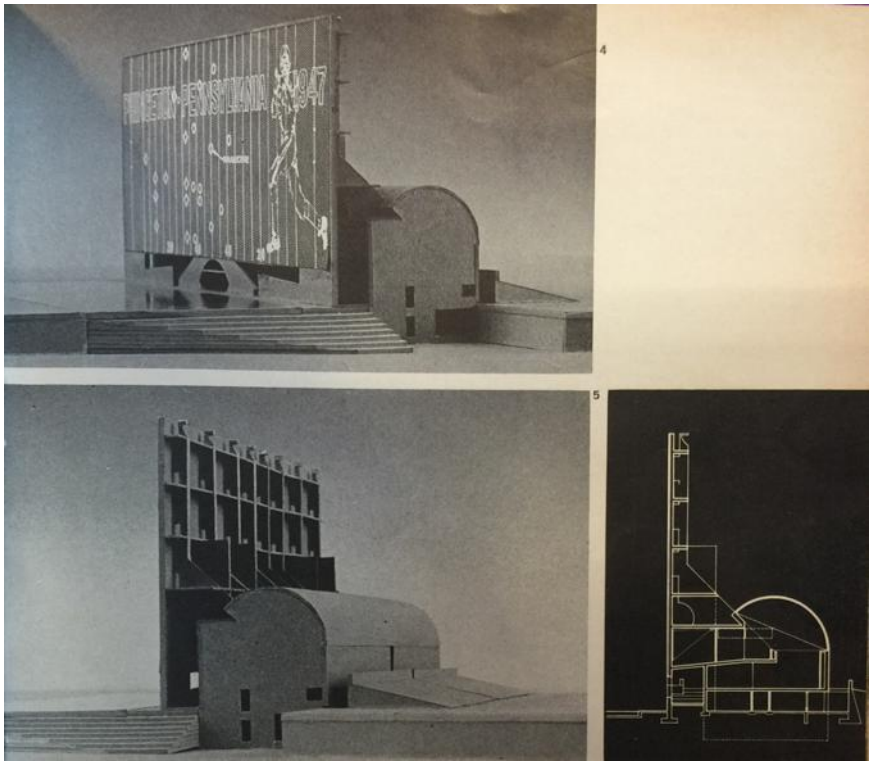

Figure 4.25 Venturi's Bill-Ding Board Project, 1967. Source: Robert Venturi, "A Bill-Ding-Board Involving Movies, Relics and Space," *Architectural Forum* 128/3, (1968): 77.

Venturi's M.F.A Thesis: "Context in Architectural Composition"

In his acceptance speech of the Madison Medal in 1985, Venturi stated: "I like to consider myself very much a product of the Department of Architecture of my time. And I feel myself to be a son of Princeton…"[326] He had graduated from Princeton University School of Architecture in 1947 and had completed his master's at the same university in 1950.[327] His thesis supervisor was French architect Jean Labatut, who trained in L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and was the leading figure in the Princeton University School of Architecture for several decades after being appointed as a design critic in 1928.[328] Venturi presented his master's thesis on 24 February, 1950 to a jury composed of his supervisor Jean Labatut, director of the school Sherley W. Morgan, art historian E. Baldwin Smith, and architects George Howe, Robert Jacobs and Louis Kahn.[329] The title of the thesis was "Context in Architectural Composition", which had been named originally "In Architectural Composition: Spatial Context", as written in the draft pages of the thesis. **(Figure 4.26)** Although the word spatial was omitted from the title, it remained pertinent in the entire study. One corner of the draft was also marked as "Space, Time and Context," alluding to Sigfried Giedion's book *Space, Time and Architecture.* Replacing architecture with context, Venturi was proposing that meaning is not derived from the object itself, but from its relationships with its context. The thesis criticised the understanding of architecture as a self-contained entity, emphasizing rather the larger wholes that such units compose, and was set out in three parts: main argument, case studies and final design proposal.[330]

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[326] Robert Venturi, "Essay Derived From the Acceptance Speech, the Madison Medal, Princeton University," in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, ed. Robert Venturi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 93.

[327] For a brief history of the founding of the Princeton University School of Architecture, see: David van Zanten, "The 'Princeton System' and the Founding of the School of Architecture, 1915-1920," in *The Architecture of Robert Venturi*, ed. Christopher Mead (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 34-44.

[328] Venturi, therefore, received a traditional architectural education shaped by Beaux-Arts principles, and would later highlight its importance on various occasions. One of Venturi's articles is specifically important in this context: "Learning the Right Lessons from the Beaux Arts," *Architectural Design* 49 (1979): 23–31.

[329] Kahn was not a famous figure when Venturi invited him to his jury. Venturi got to know Kahn after he started working in Robert Montgomery Brown's office upon his graduation in 1947, which was located at the same building as Kahn's own office.

[330] In total, the thesis presentation consisted of 25 sheets designed specifically by Venturi himself. Venturi designed almost all the sheets in unique shapes and sizes, breaking the rules and regulations of the university in the visual representation. This later created tension between Venturi and the university when it came to submit photostats of the thesis. After several correspondences with the university, Venturi refused to prepare a proper submission of his thesis, and for this reason, his professor Jean Labatut reported the situation to be added to Venturi's official records at the University. See: Henry A. Jandl's letter to Venturi, 20 December, 1950; Venturi's response to this letter dated 22 December, 1950; and Sherley W. Morgan's letter to Venturi on 16 January, 1951 with an attachment of Jean Labatut's report dated 15 January, 1951 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.36, Correspondence, To and From RV (8/31/1950-10/6/1954).

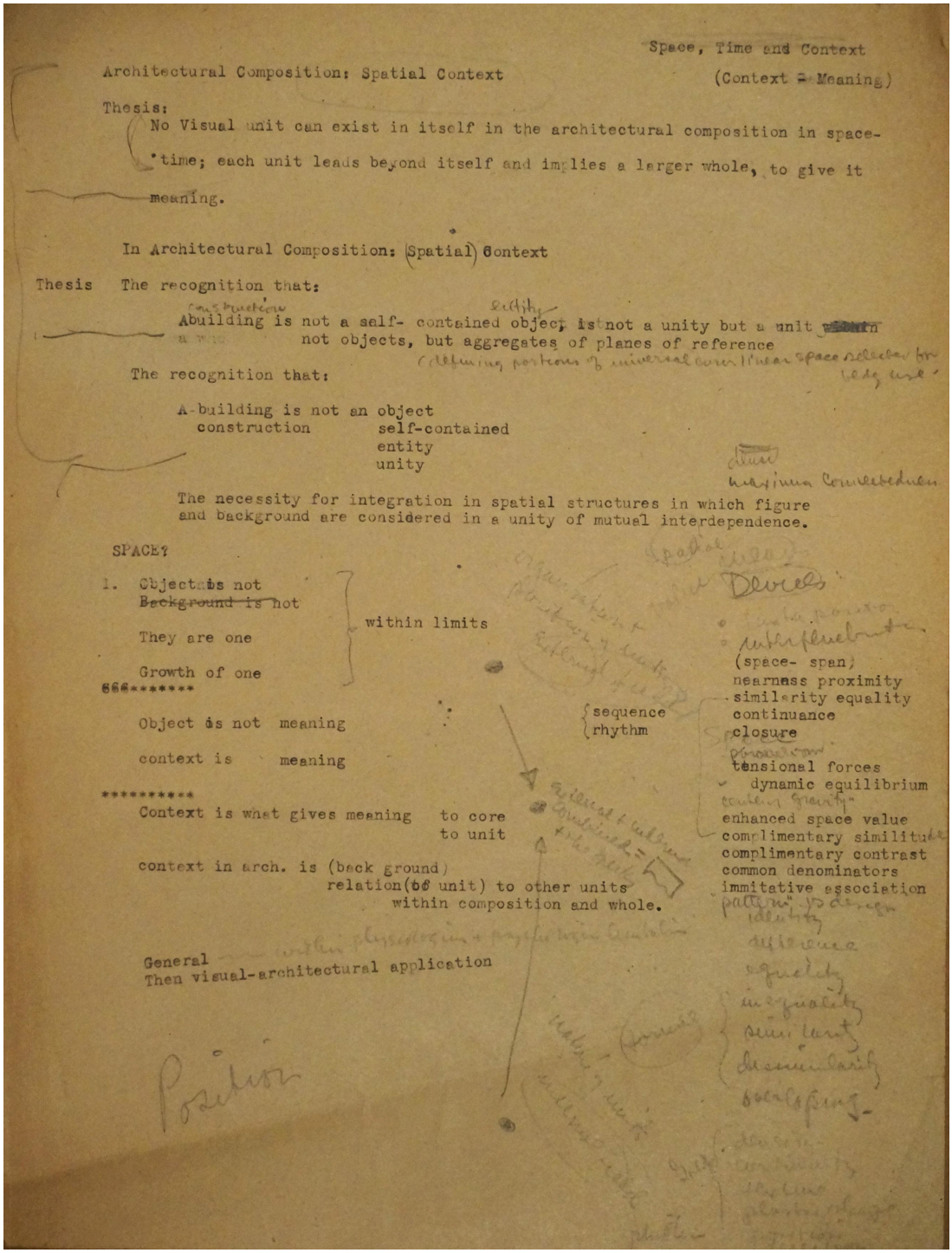

Figure 4.26. A draft page of Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, circa 1949. The working title of the thesis was "In Architectural Composition: Spatial Context." On the upper right corner, Venturi wrote "Space, Time and Context", alluding to Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Unnamed, File: "Student Work".

The main arguments in Venturi's thesis were twofold. First, he proposed that "its context gives a building expression, its meaning", which means "a building is not a self-contained object but a part in a whole composition relative to other parts and the whole";[331] and second, he

[331] Robert Venturi, "*M.F.A Thesis*, Sheet 2," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

claimed that “change in context causes change in expression”, which he explained further as “change of a part (addition or alteration) causes a change in the other parts and in the whole”.[332] In this regard, Venturi aimed to show the significant role of context in the design of a building and the building’s reciprocal effect in changing the expression and perception of its context. These two main statements were later explained through diagrams derived from Gestalt psychology. In the first set of diagrams, Venturi addressed the role of an objects’ *position* in affecting the perception of its spatial contexts, and presented his argument through a comparative study of different compositions conditioned by proximity, juxtaposition, parallel, direction and closure. The role of the *form* of buildings in relating them with their physical contexts was expressed in the second set of abstract drawings, with comparative diagrams of size, shape, texture, hue and value introduced to exemplify how objects can complement their contexts, either through similarity or contrast. **(Figure 4.27)** In brief, Venturi considered the *position* and *form* of a building to be two essential elements in contextual architecture.

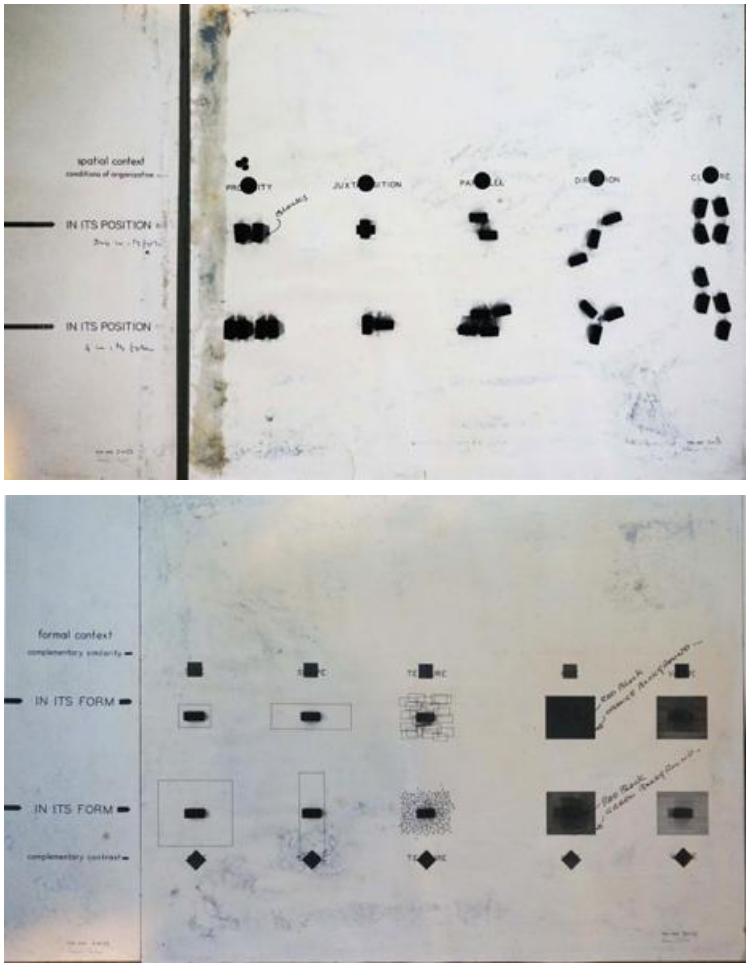

Figure 4.27. Top: Venturi’s M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 3. Gestalt diagrams of proximity, juxtaposition, parallel, direction, closure showing how a change in the position of objects affects their spatial context. Bottom: Venturi’s M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 4-5. Gestalt diagrams of size, shape, texture, hue, and value showing how change in the formal context affects the spatial perception of objects in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

[332] Venturi, *M.F.A Thesis*, Sheet 2.

Gestalt (meaning shape and form in German) psychology was developed in the Berlin School of Experimental Psychology at the turn of the last century. Criticizing the scientific method of solving problems by breaking them into fragments and reassembling them after discovering their inner laws, Gestalt theorists claimed that wholes have their own intrinsic laws that operate independently of the sole character of the individual fragments.[333] In this respect, Gestalt psychology focuses not on the fragments themselves, but on the relationships between them. For Venturi, this theory was instrumental in criticising the object-fixation of orthodox modern architecture and the shift in emphasis to their compositional relationships in the urban setting. He described his discovery of Gestalt, "I vividly remember my Eureka-like response in 1949 when I came across the idea of perceptual context in Gestalt psychology as I perused a journal of psychology in the library in Eno Hall at Princeton and recognised its relevance for architecture…"[334] As can be understood from his draft pages, the article he mentioned was Harry Helson's "The Fundamental Propositions of Gestalt Psychology", published in *Psychological Review* 40 in 1933[335] The article, derived from Helson's dissertation "The Configurational Theory of Perception", completed at Harvard University in 1924, summarised the main points of Gestalt psychology by referring to its protagonists Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler.

In fact, Venturi was familiar with Gestalt principles before he came across Helson's article, in that the "Planning Man's Physical Environment" conference was held on 5–6 March, 1947 at Princeton while Venturi was a senior student. Among the many well-known architects and scholars who spoke at the event (including Alvar Aalto, Sigfried Giedion, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Eero Saarinen, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright), was György Kepes, who had just launched a visual design programme in School of Architecture and Planning at MIT. It is no surprise that a copy of the conference statement of Kepes, who was engaged deeply in Gestalt psychology, was found next to the draft pages of Venturi's master thesis.[336] **(Figure 4.28)** Although Kepes did not refer directly to Gestalt psychology in his statement, his argument on its main directive dwelled not on the isolated units themselves, but rather on

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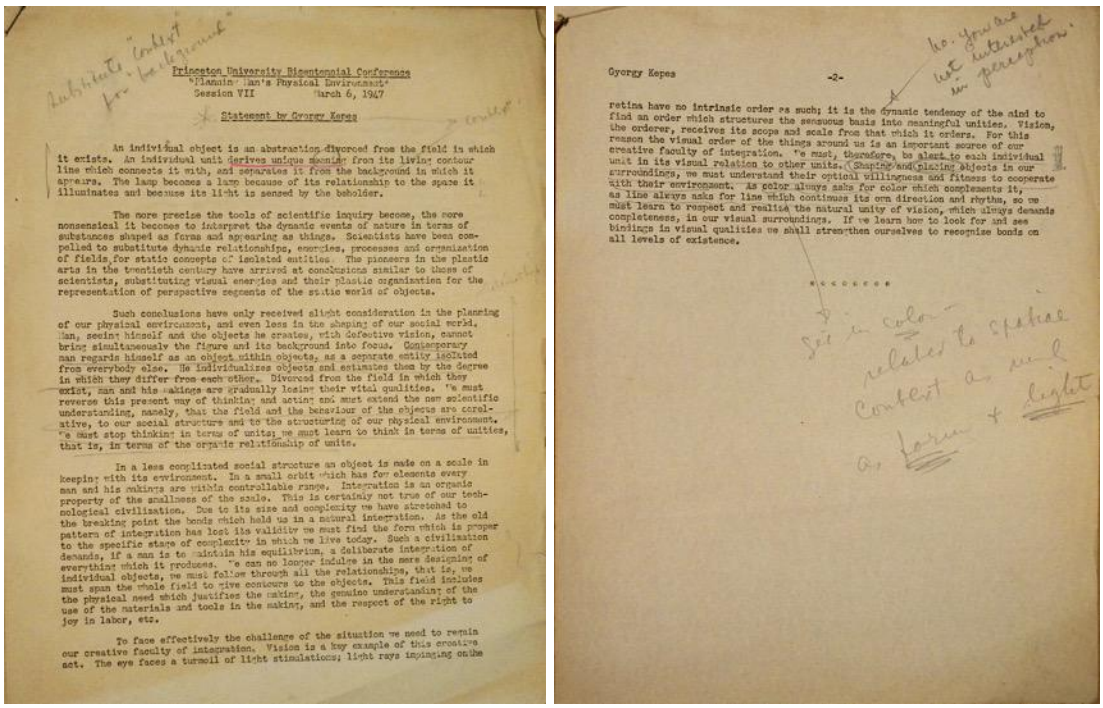
[333] Max Wertheimer, "Gestalt Theory," in *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed. Willis D. Ellis (New York: Gestalt Journal Press, 1997), 2. This book contains translations of sections of the main articles dealing with Gestalt psychology. Originally published in 1938, the goal was to introduce the theory to English-speaking readers in a concise and comprehensive way.

[334] Robert Venturi, "Context in Architectural Composition: M.F.A. Thesis, Princeton University," in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, ed. Robert Venturi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 333.

[335] Venturi gave the reference as Nelson, *Gestalt Psychology*, in the later publication of the thesis in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture*. However, this reference is inconclusive.

[336] Kepes, born in Hungary, studied fine arts in Budapest and worked as a designer in Berlin. He became acquainted with Gestalt Psychology in his youth. He migrated to the United States in 1937 to teach designers in New Bauhaus (which would later become the Illinois Institute of Design) and later published his design theory in *Language of Vision*, which became a source book in many schools for the education of vision. Kepes analysed the spatial conception of the visual images in his book through paintings, book covers, advertisements, abstract diagrams, etc. To do so, he encapsulated the theories of Gestalt psychology, for which he expressed his gratitude in the acknowledgment of the book by stating "First of all the author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Gestalt psychologists. Many of the inspiring ideas and concrete illustrations of Max Wertheimer, K. Koffka, and W. Köhler, have been used in the first part of the book to explain the laws of visual organisation."

their relationships. Venturi's emphasis in his thesis on *position* and *form* in his definition of context can also be traced in Kepes' conference statement. Kepes argued that "… we must, therefore, be alert to each individual unit in its visual relation to other units. Shaping and placing objects in our surroundings, we must understand their optical willingness and fitness to cooperate with their environment".[337] This statement, highlighted also by Venturi himself, introduced the *shaping* and *placing*, in other words, the *form* and *position,* of objects as the two main dimensions of perceptual context.



Princeton University Bicentennial Conference
'Planning Man's Physical Environment'
Session VII March 6, 1947

Statement by Gyorgy Kepes

An individual object is an abstraction divorced from the field in which it exists. An individual unit derives unique meaning from its living contour line which connects it with, and separates it from the background in which it appears. The lamp becomes a lamp because of its relationship to the space it illuminates and because its light is sensed by the beholder.

The more precise the tools of scientific inquiry become, the more nonsensical it becomes to interpret the dynamic events of nature in terms of substances shaped as forms and appearing as things. Scientists have been compelled to substitute dynamic relationships, energies, processes and organization of fields for static concepts of isolated entities. The pioneers in the plastic arts in the twentieth century have arrived at conclusions similar to those of scientists, substituting visual energies and their plastic organization for the representation of perspective segments of the static world of objects.

Such conclusions have only received slight consideration in the planning of our physical environment, and even less in the shaping of our social world. Man, society himself and the objects he creates, with defective vision, cannot bring simultaneously the figure and its background into focus. Contemporary man regards himself as an object within objects, as a separate entity isolated from everybody else. He individualizes objects and estimates them by the degree in which they differ from each other. Divorced from the field in which they exist, man and his makings are gradually losing their vital qualities. We must reverse this present way of thinking and acting and must extend the new scientific understanding, namely, that the field and the behaviour of the objects are correlative, to our social structure and to the structuring of our physical environment. We must stop thinking in terms of units, we must learn to think in terms of unities, that is, in terms of the organic relationship of units.

In a less complicated social structure an object is made on a scale in keeping with its environment. In a small orbit which has few elements every man and his makings are within controllable range. Integration is an organic property of the smallness of the scale. This is certainly not true of our technological civilization. Due to its size and complexity we have stretched to the breaking point the bonds which hold us in a natural integration. As the old pattern of integration has lost its validity we must find the form which is proper to the specific state of complexity in which we live today. Such a civilization demands, if a man is to maintain his equilibrium, a deliberate integration of everything which it produces. We can no longer indulge in the mere designing of individual objects, we must follow through all the relationships, that is, we must span the whole field to give contours to the objects. This field includes the physical need which justifies the making, the genuine understanding of the use of the materials and tools in the making, and the respect of the right to joy in labor, etc.

To face effectively the challenge of the situation we need to regain our creative faculty of integration. Vision is a key example of this creative act. The eye faces a turmoil of light stimulations; light rays impinging on the

Gyorgy Kepes -2-

retina have no intrinsic order as such; it is the dynamic tendency of the mind to find an order which structures the sensuous basis into meaningful unities. Vision, the orderer, receives its scope and scale from that which it orders. For this reason the visual order of the things around us is an important source of our creative faculty of integration. We must, therefore, be alert to each individual unit in its visual relation to other units. Shaping and placing objects in our surroundings, we must understand their optical willingness and fitness to cooperate with their environment. As color always asks for color which complements it, as line always asks for line which continues its own direction and rhythm, so we must learn to respect and realize the natural unity of vision, which always demands completeness, in our visual surroundings. If we learn how to look for and see bindings in visual qualities we shall strengthen ourselves to recognize bonds on all levels of existence.

Figure 4.28. Kepes' Conference Statement presented at "Planning Man's Physical Environment" conference on 5–6 March, 1947 at Princeton in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Unnamed, File: "Student Work".

Deborah Fausch, in her PhD thesis "The Context of Meaning is Everyday Life: Venturi and Scott Brown's Theories of Architecture and Urbanism", studied also Venturi and Scott Brown's early years from 1940s until the mid 1970s in reference to three main themes: context, meaning and everyday life. The first chapter entitled "Context and Expression: Robert Venturi's 'Theory of History," is devoted to the concept of context in Venturi's Master thesis and in his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. Here, Fausch introduced Kepes' exhibition *The New Landscape* and his same titled book as one of the major sources that affected Venturi's understanding of context, which was also shaped with significant alterations from Kepes' definitions. In this thesis, Fausch also emphasized the notion "expression", which was indebted to the education in Princeton, as the major discussion of architecture in Venturi's Master thesis proposal. In this regard, she offered a different

[337] György Kepes, "Statement for Princeton University Bicentennial Conference: Planning Man's Physical Environment," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Unnamed, File: "Student Work".

perspective than this thesis in interpreting Venturi's understanding of context with her detailed study on discussing architecture in terms of expression in the educational context of Princeton University, School of Architecture and with her particular emphasis on Kepes' book *The New Landscape* as the most fundamental reference for Venturi's preoccupation with context.[338]

After the introduction of the main argument of the thesis, Venturi presented various case studies. His study of architectural precedents was not only instrumental for Venturi in supporting his argument, but also allowed him to position himself within the broader architectural discourse. It is significant to mention that architectural education at Princeton placed special emphasis on architectural history in its curriculum.[339] Venturi's interest in history and architectural precedents was in fact cultivated by Donald Drew Egbert, who was teaching a course on the History of Modern Architecture at Princeton.[340] In this course, Egbert altered the stylistic reading of architectural history by situating Modern Architecture in a broader and more inclusive historical context, for instance, by pointing out the legacy of the then outmoded Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It is therefore not surprising that Venturi, who took Egbert's course four times, used a broad range of historical and modern architectural examples in his master's thesis, mainly from Rome, while his contemporary domestic architectural projects were mostly selected from the United States. **(Figure 4.29 and Figure 4.30)** Venturi presented his examples with site plans, perspective drawings and photographs to make a clear demonstration of their *position* and *form*. His analyses were based on a comparison of the original designs of the projects with their changed contexts, or with a similar project in a different context. The intention was to prove the two main arguments of the thesis, being "its context gives a building expression" and "a change in context causes change in expression". Through his comparative analysis of the architectural precedents, Venturi revealed how the expressions and perceptions of the buildings were affected by their formal and spatial contexts.

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[338] For this alternative reading of Venturi's early years, see: Deborah Fausch, "The Context of Meaning is Everyday Life: Venturi and Scott Brown's Theories of Architecture and Urbanism" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999).

[339] "The fact that Princeton's art history and architecture programs shared the same building and their students took the same basic architectural history courses reinforced the connection between art history and architecture and ensured the ongoing importance of architectural history in the curriculum." Anthony Alofsin, "American Modernism's Challenge to the Beaux-Arts," in *Architectural School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, ed. Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 115.

[340] Venturi expressed his indebtedness to Egbert in various publications and interviews. His "Donald Drew Egbert-A Tribute" was published as a foreword to Egbert's book *The Beaux Arts Tradition in French Architecture*, ed. David van Zanten (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), xiii-xiv.

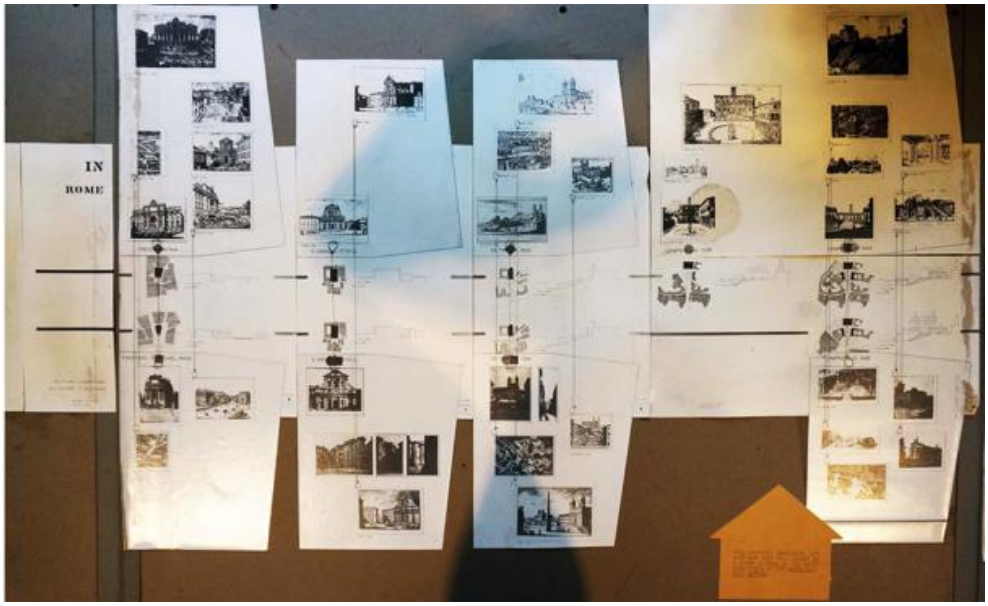

Figure 4.29. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheets 6-11, Case Studies from Rome. In this section, Venturi compared the Trevi Fountain with Fontaine St. Michel; Church of S. Ignazio before and after the design of its 18th century piazza; SS. Trinità before and after the construction of the Spanish Stairs; the original Campidoglio with Michelangelo's Campidoglio, and the contemporary Campidoglio with its 20th century alterations (erection of Victor Emmanuel Monument and the removal of the congested surrounding area); the Pantheon with McKim, Mead and White's Philadelphia Girard Trust Bank building and Jefferson's University of Virginia in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

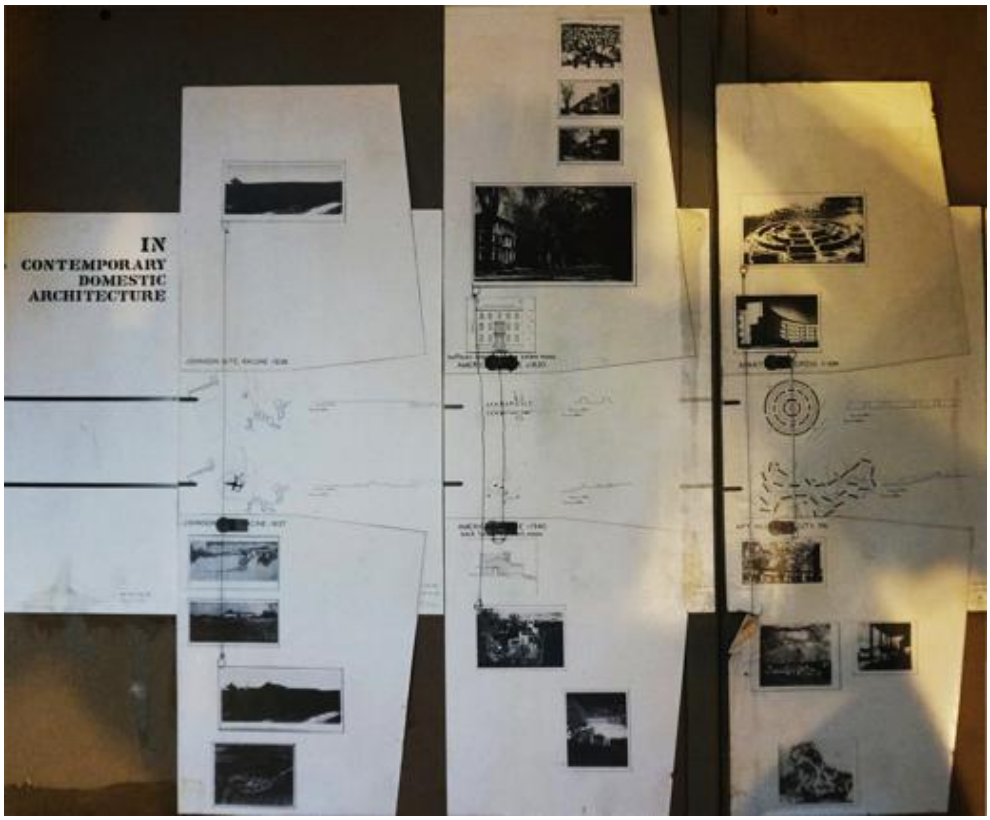

Figure 4.30. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheets 12-15, Case Studies from Contemporary Domestic Architecture. Examples show his comparisons of the Johnson Site at Racine before and after Frank Lloyd Wright's house; the 19th-century Simpson-Hoffman house in Salem, Massachusetts with the 20th-century Koch House in Snake Hill, Belmont; and the Aluminium Terrace Apartment, Pittsburgh, c. 1940 with the Runtung apartment, Leipzig, c. 1935 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

Venturi's interest in history and architectural precedents were further triggered with his first European trip in summer 1948. During his nine-week tour of the UK, France and Italy, Venturi visited many projects, some of which later became his case studies in his thesis, such as the Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon dome and the Piazza of Capitoline Hill. Venturi's report of his summer trip shows explicitly his focus on the spatial context over the iconographic one. In the first page of the report, Venturi wrote, "I did little diagramming because spatial affects which I was interested in more than decorative detail per se is difficult to indicate two-dimensionally…".[341] Later, in his master's thesis, Venturi did referred to no decorative properties, neither in the case studies nor in the final design proposal. Mentioning Camillo Sitte in the report, Venturi's interest in the trip was more oriented to the city planning characteristics of (Baroque) Rome, and in this regard, the greatest lesson he took from the trip was the direct experience of the Italian piazza and its spatial context. He wrote:

> My most impressive revelation was the spatial character of the Italian piazza. The revelation was also the most surprising because the spatial sensation is one that cannot be comprehended except by direct experience and this urban phenomenon the American student (especially the grid-iron Philadelphian) even with an extensive-book knowledge, could not know. Investigation of these piazzas became the discovery of the enclosed exterior space, of a pedestrian scale, and an expression of organic growth.[342]

The pedestrian experience of the urban space as a differentiated whole later guided Venturi in the design proposal he developed for his master's thesis. Surprisingly, Venturi also mentioned the use of false façades in Italian architecture, stating, "The use of false façades is not an indication of a lack of consciousness of the space dimension in architecture … This decorative plane happens to have a cathedral behind it."[343] Although the main lesson of the trip was the *spatial context* of the Italian piazza, Venturi also discovered the *false façade* in Italy, although it took almost 20 years for it to become his principal design strategy.

In the final part of his thesis, Venturi proposed a chapel design for the Episcopal Academy in Merion, Pa, where he had previously studied. The design of the chapel was informed by its context and by its programme, [344] and devoid of any decoration or ornament, the symbolic or associational content of the design was achieved by the *formal* expression of its programme, while *position* of the building was decided according to the exigencies of its *context.* In this regard, the presentation of the project was based on an articulation of the reasoning behind its *position* and *form*. In terms of its position, the Chapel was located in between two existing converted mansions, creating a unity that made them appear to be one institution. **(Figure**

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[341] Robert Venturi, "Sumer Activities: Report and Some Impressions, 1948," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.34, Summer Activity: Report and Some Impressions (1948).

[342] Robert Venturi, "Sumer Activities," 8.

[343] Robert Venturi, "Sumer Activities," 4.

[344] In 2008, the Episcopal Academy's campus was relocated from Merion to Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. Almost 60 years after his master's thesis, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates designed the Episcopal Academy Chapel for the new campus. The new design differs substantially from the design developed in the master's thesis, since the new context and the client demanded a half-circular plan.

4.31) By giving the building a slightly angled location on the site, the aim was both to provide a relationship with the two existing mansions, and also to convert the empty plot between them into an enclosed urban space. Various walls were added to the site to orient movement in space. Venturi took inspiration from three previous buildings when positioning the chapel on its site: Saint-Pierre in Rome, for its capacity to define space; Mies van der Rohe's Brick Country House, for its use of walls to direct space; and the Acropolis, for its angled position. **(Figure 4.32)** In terms of its form, the exterior of the Chapel appears simple and neutral with its blind walls, while its interior is articulated with structure, light and colour. **(Figure 4.33)** The form of the chapel was also informed by several examples, including as Mies' Brick Country House, with its neutral expression of blind walls; Salisbury Cathedral, with its section; the roof of Jesus College Hall in Oxford, with its elaborate truss structure, etc. **(Figure 4.34)** Although Venturi gave special emphasis to the form and position of the building to create "the difficult whole", he did not present the spatial qualities of this urban composition, and there were no perspective drawings or sketches presented to show the perception of the building or the public space in the urban context.

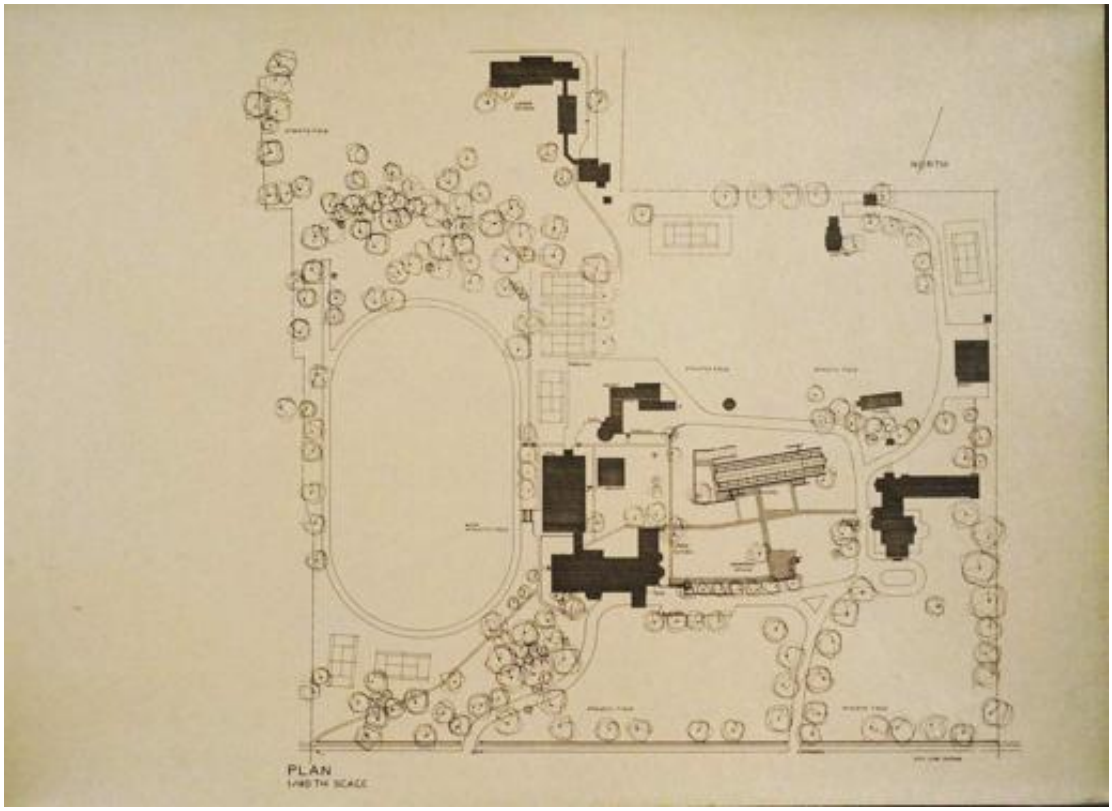

Figure 4.31. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 19, Design Proposal for Episcopal Academy Chapel, Site Plan in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

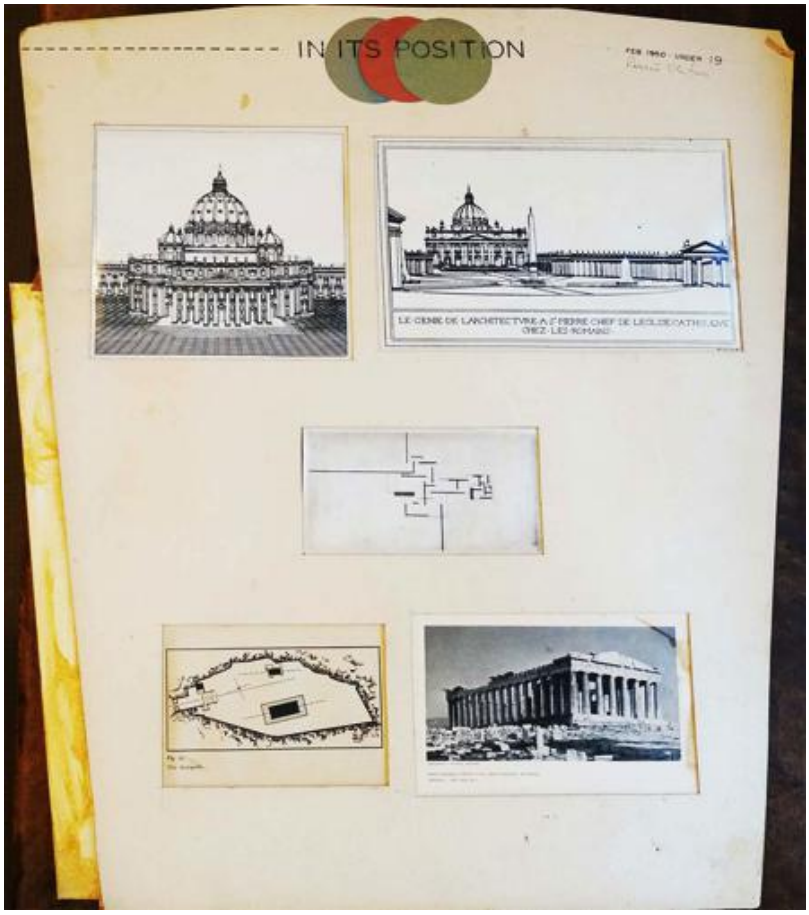

Figure 4.32. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 19a, Precedents informing position of the Episcopal Academy Chapel Design in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

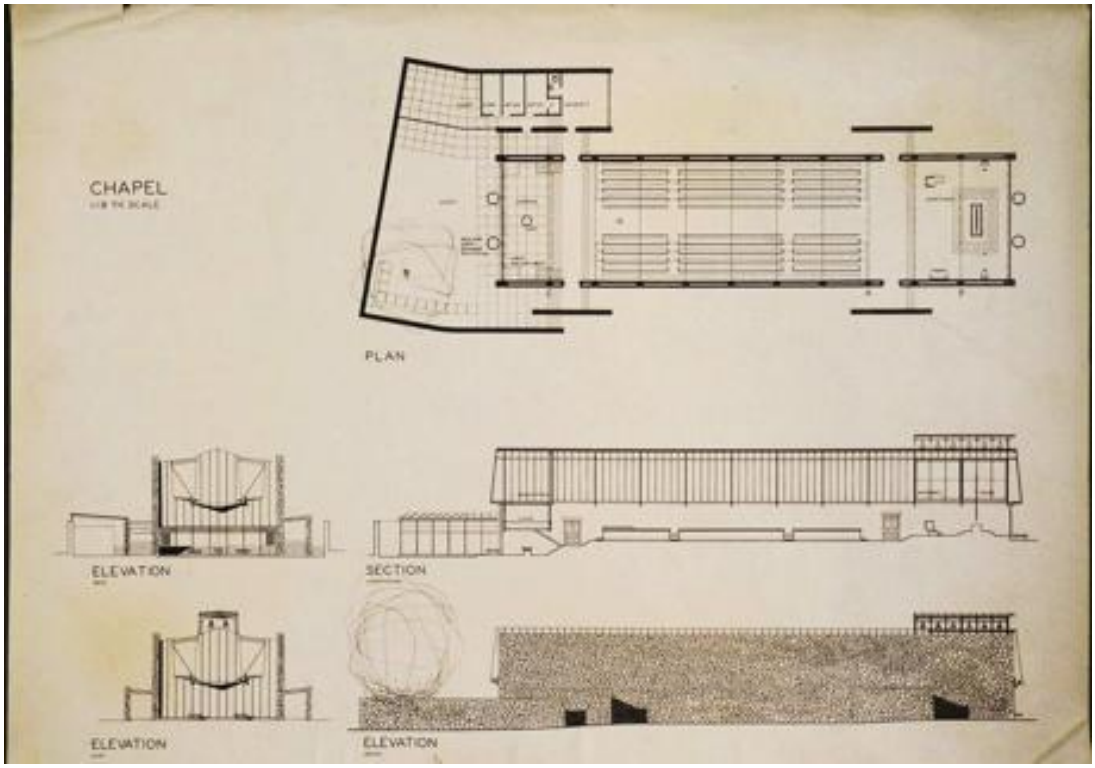

Figure 4.33. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 22, Design Proposal for the Episcopal Academy Chapel, Plan, Section and Elevations in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

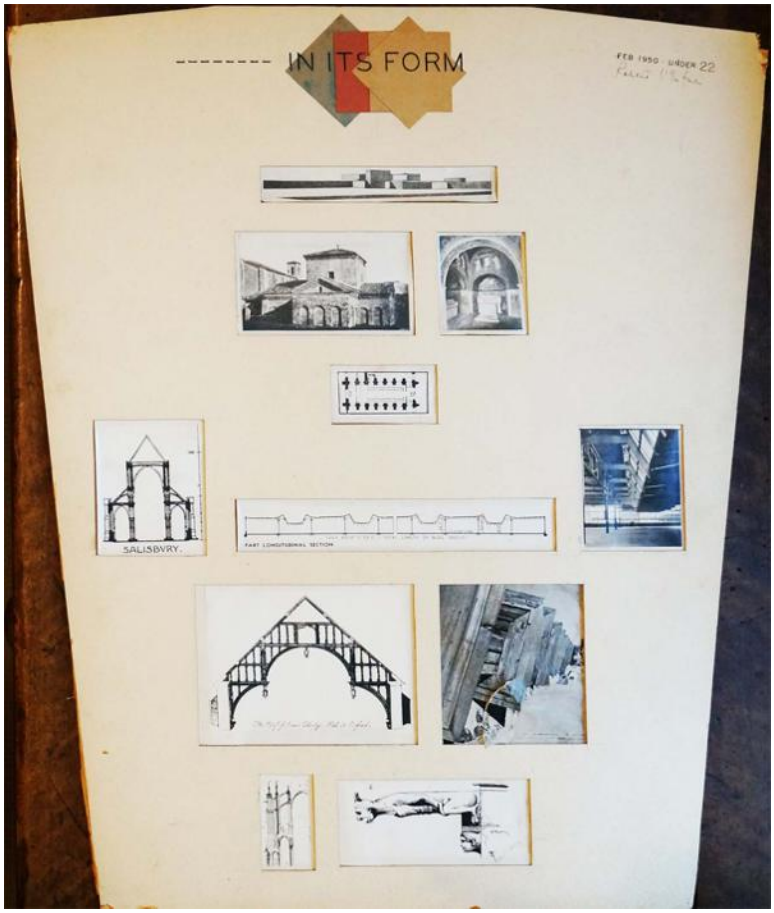

Figure 4.34. Venturi's M.F.A. Thesis, Sheet 22a, Precedents informing form of the Episcopal Academy Chapel Design in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection.

Although the form and position of the chapel were informed by the study of abstract Gestalt diagrams and architectural precedents, many of the design strategies were also rooted in Venturi's bachelor education. For instance, in 1945, Venturi was set the task of studying *walls* "to show as graphically, as possible the development and the reasons for the different forms of wall and support from Ancient to Modern times, including structure and expression (visual appearance)".[345] For this exercise, Venturi studied various examples of walls from different periods (i.e. Egyptian, Classical, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Contemporary) and explained their structural (material and purpose) and expressive (form, ornament, scale) concept with texts, plans and perspective drawings. **(Figure 4.35)** Later, in his master's thesis, the wall became a significant structural and expressive element in the Episcopal Academy Chapel design. Venturi's choice of a church as the focus of his master's thesis is not surprising, given that he had studied the problem several times while studying for his bachelor's degree. In 1946, he prepared a booklet on Western Christian Church Architecture in which he analysed various examples from different periods in terms of their programme, construction and expression. **(Figure 4.36)** Venturi also designed a rural Roman

[345] Robert Venturi, "Princeton University, School of Architecture, Junior Independent Work, Problem I, 7 November, 1945," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Unnamed, File: "Student Work".

Catholic Church in Louisiana as a studio project at Princeton, which with its blind walls was the precursor of the Episcopal Chapel design. **(Figure 4.37)**

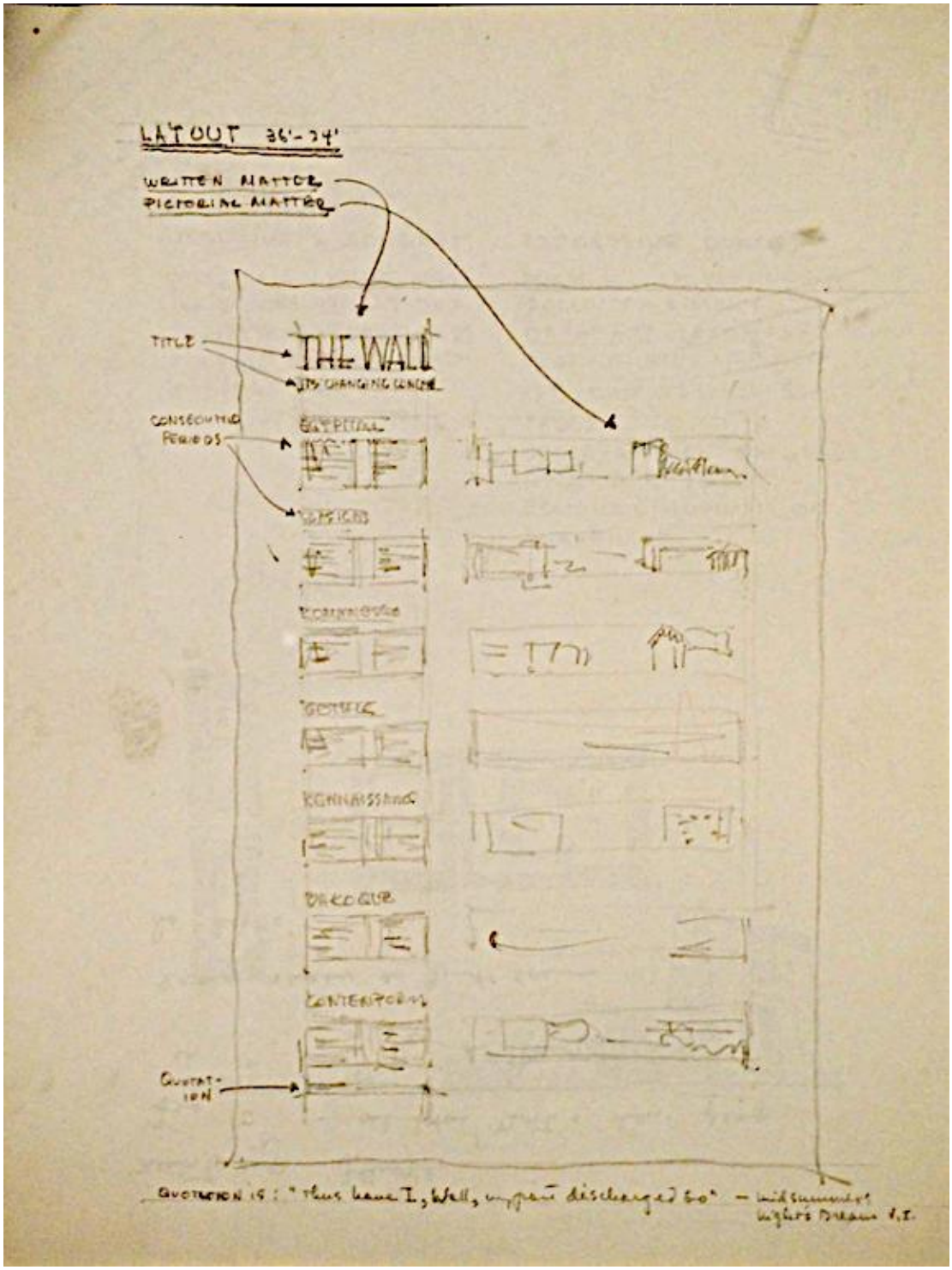

Figure 4.35. A draft page from Venturi's Junior Independent Work entitled "The Wall: Its Changing Concept," 20 November, 1945 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work.

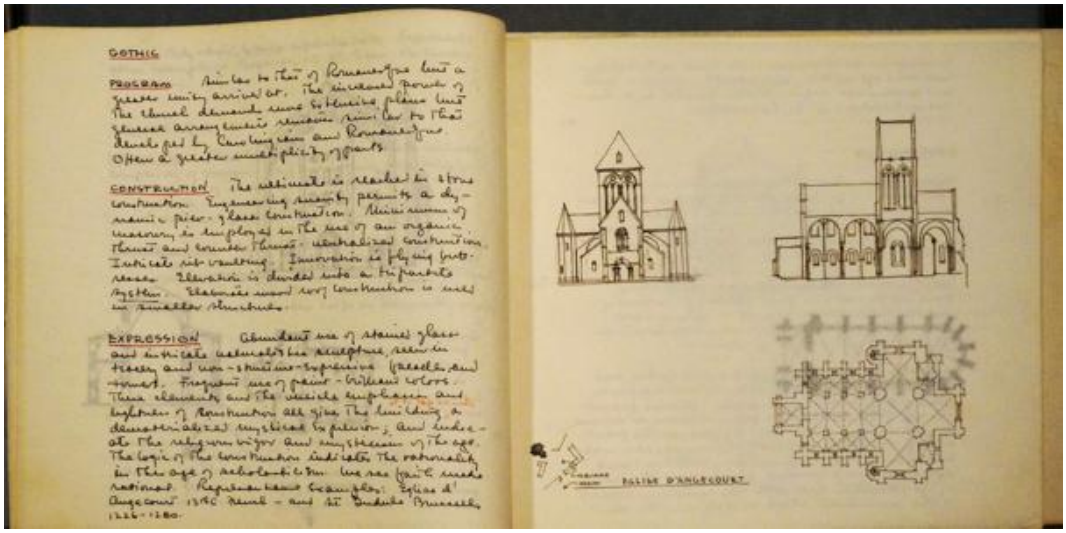

Figure 4.36. A sample page from Venturi's booklet on "Western Christian Church Architecture," 4 May, 1946 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work.

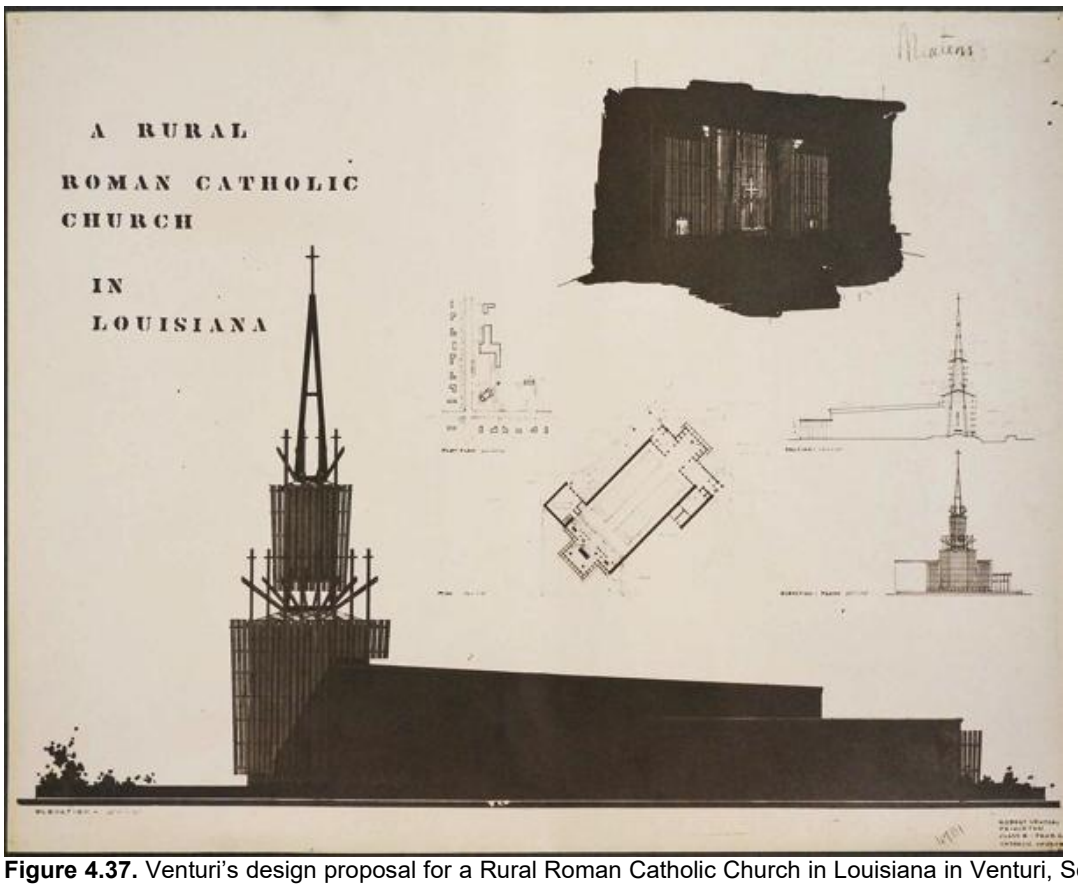

Figure 4.37. Venturi's design proposal for a Rural Roman Catholic Church in Louisiana in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work, File: Venturi, Robert. Student Works, ca. 1946-49.

Venturi's emphasis on the visual, spatial and perceptual character and the experience of urban settings, which was informed by his education at Princeton, his first trip to Europe and his discovery of Gestalt, had close affinities with the British Townscape Movement. The Townscape Movement, which was propagated mainly by *Architectural Review,* was

introduced first in 1949 by the editor of the journal Hubert De Cronin Hastings with the article "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price", written under the pseudonym of Ivor de Wolfe.[346] Hastings, referring to Price's article on picturesque dating of 1794, argued:

> So regarded the Picturesque Movement has a significance for transcending its local position in landscape-gardening history, for acknowledgement in our own day of the existence of a perennially English *visual philosophy* could revolutionize our national contribution to architecture and town-planning by making possible our own regional development of International style, as a result of our own self-knowledge – technics given in marriage to *psychology*.[347] (emphasis mine)

In the article, Hastings underlined the necessity of establishing a vocabulary for the English visual philosophy of landscape through the study of precedents. The article, accordingly, was followed by a Casebook that was prepared by the art editor of the journal Gordon Cullen, explaining the practice of townscaping through serial vision drawings that were later expanded in the book *The Concise Townscape*.

Venturi's involvement in the *Architectural Review*'s Townscape policy was more than just as an outside reader. On 8 November, 1950, nearly nine months after completing his master's thesis, Venturi sent a letter to the editors of the journal stating "two articles you have published as well as the general policy of the Review have paralleled closely the subject and method of a thesis which I presented last February at Princeton for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Architecture".[348] **(Figure 4.38)** The two articles he was referring were Hasting's "Townscape" and Henry Hope Reed's "Rome: The Third Sack," which was published in February 1950. Venturi attached to the letter photostat copies and a record of the oral presentation of his master thesis for the review.[349] After a long delay, Venturi's first article "The Campidoglio: A Case Study" was published eventually in *Architectural Review* in May 1953, in which he argued that Michelangelo's design had enhanced Campidoglio's spatial context, while the erection of the Victor Emmanuel Monument and the constructions made in the surrounding area during the Mussolini era had destroyed the perception of Campidoglio, although leaving it physically untouched.[350] Venturi's argument, derived originally from Gestalt

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[346] The journal was in fact propagating a policy against the government's Town Planning Acts (1943,1944, 1947), which were guiding the post-war construction of England, by proposing the 18th century English Picturesque theory as an alternative to orthodoxy of international modernism. For a more detailed information see: Erdem Erten, "Shaping 'The Second Half Century': *The Architectural Review* 1947-1971" (PhD diss., MIT, 2004).

[347] Ivor De Wolfe, "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price," *Architectural Review* 106 (1949): 355.

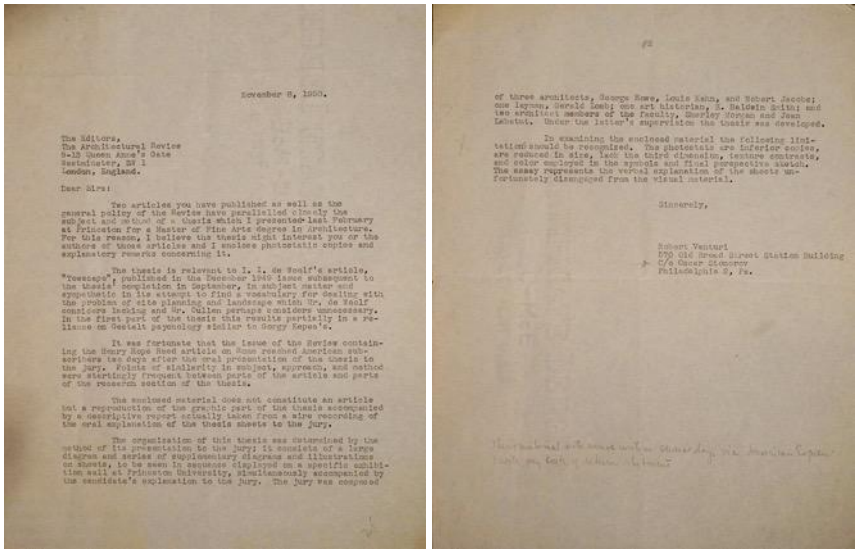
[348] Robert Venturi, "Letter to the Editors of Architectural Review, 8 November, 1950," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work, File: Unnamed.

[349] Venturi's "The Campidoglio: A Case Study" article was reviewed by the editors of *Architectural Review*, and Hubert de Cronin Hastings and Ian McCallum approved it for publication, Nikolaus Pevsner remained neutral, commenting "if it has been commissioned, there is no harm in having it", while James Maude Richards was against its publication, stating "not very keen on this". The review decision of "The Campidoglio: A Case Study," in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work, File: Venturi, Robert. MFA Thesis, Text and Pictorial Work.

[350] Robert Venturi, "The Campidoglio: A Case Study," *Architectural Review* 113/677 (1953): 333–34. This article later gave its name to Venturi and Scott Brown's book *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953–1984*, in which "The Campidoglio: A Case Study" was published as the first article.

psychology, was published in *Architectural Review* under the heading of “Townscape” in a section that became permanent for the following decades after the publication of the first essay in 1949.

Gestalt psychology and the townscape argument are similar in that they both refer to a spatial layered perception; the former expressed through abstract diagrams, and the latter through serial vision drawings. Both emphasise visual philosophy and perceptual form as a means of urban composition, and a spatial unity that is achieved not (only) by harmony but (also) by contradictions. Although Hastings suggested that townscape was a radical theory aimed at a *differentiated whole*, it was soon subjected to criticism for rather being conventional. An attack against townscape was developed in Britain in the early 1950s by a group which looked to everyday commercial environments for inspiration. With a membership that included artists, photographers and architects, the Independent Group initiated the Pop Art movement in Britain, with the *Architectural Design* journal becoming a significant medium for the dissemination of their ideas.[351] Influenced by American commercial art, Pop Art became an alternative to the traditional picturesque British tradition that was revitalised through the townscape movement. This shifted the emphasis from the spatial experience of an urban unity to the symbolism of everyday life, which later found reflection in Venturi’s career in the 1960s.



November 8, 1950.

The Editors,
The Architectural Review
9-13 Queen Anne's Gate
Westminster, SW 1
London, England.

Dear Sirs:

Two articles you have published as well as the general policy of the Review have paralleled closely the subject and method of a thesis which I presented last February at Princeton for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Architecture. For this reason, I believe the thesis might interest you or the authors of those articles and I enclose photostatic copies and explanatory remarks concerning it.

The thesis is relevant to I. I. de Woolf's article, "Townscape", published in the December 1949 issue subsequent to the thesis' completion in September. In subject matter and sympathetic in its attempt to find a vocabulary for dealing with the problem of site planning and landscape with Mr. de Woolf somewhat lacking and Mr. Cullen perhaps somewhat unnecessary. In the first part of the thesis this results partially in a reliance on Gestalt psychology similar to Georgy Kepes's.

It was fortunate that the issue of the Review containing the Henry Hope Reed article on Rome reached American subscribers ten days after the oral presentation of the thesis to the jury. Points of similarity in subject, approach, and method were startlingly frequent between parts of the article and parts of the research section of the thesis.

The enclosed material does not constitute an article but a reproduction of the graphic part of the thesis accompanied by a descriptive report actually taken from a wire recording of the oral explanation of the thesis sheets to the jury.

The organization of this thesis was determined by the method of its presentation to the jury; it consists of a large diagram and series of supplementary diagrams and illustrations on sheets, to be seen in sequence displayed on a specific exhibition wall at Princeton University, simultaneously accompanied by the candidate's explanation to the jury. The jury was composed

of three architects, George Howe, Louis Kahn, and Robert Jacobs; one layman, Gerald Loeb; one art historian, E. Baldwin Smith; and two architect members of the faculty, Shorley Fiorman and Jean Labatut. Under the latter's supervision the thesis was developed.

In examining the enclosed material the following limitations should be recognized. The photostats are inferior copies, are reduced in size, lack the third dimension, texture contrasts, and color employed in the symbols and final perspective sketch. The essay represents the verbal explanation of the sheets unfortunately disengaged from the visual material.

Sincerely,

Robert Venturi
200 Old Broad Street Station Building
c/o Oscar Stonorov
Philadelphia 2, Pa.

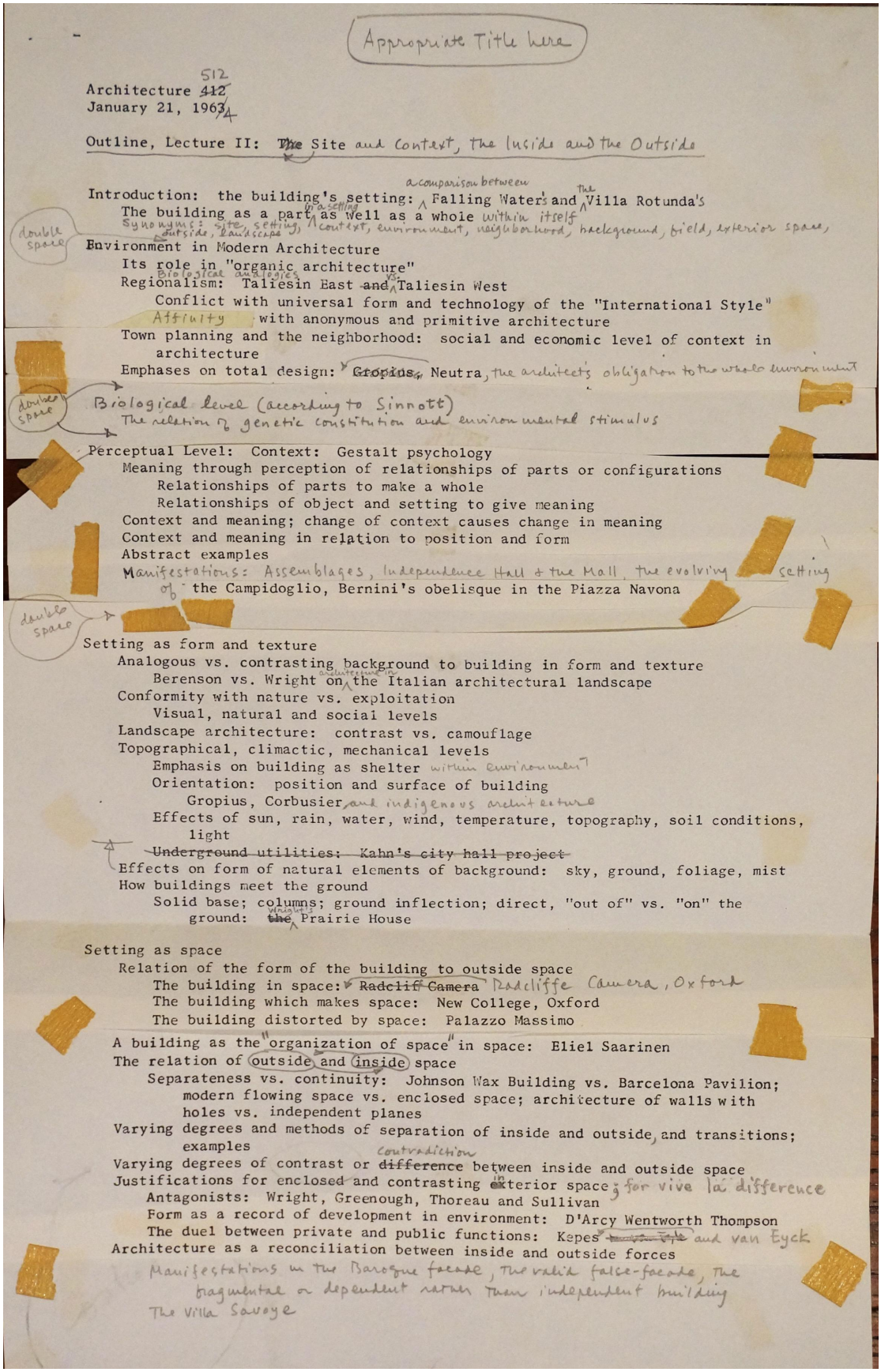
Figure 4.38 Venturi’s letter to the editors of *Architectural Review*, 8 November, 1950 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, Box: Venturi Student Work, File: Unnamed.

Conclusion

[351] For an in-depth examination of the debate between *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Design* in this particular period, see: M. Christine Boyer, “An Encounter with History: the postwar debate between the English Journals of Architectural Review and Architectural Design (1945–1960),” paper presented at “Team 10 - between Modernity and the Everyday” conference, Delft, the Netherlands, 5–6 June, 2003.

The change in Venturi's understanding of context, from spatial to iconographic, can be best traced in his lecture notes for the architectural theory course he was teaching at UPenn from 1961 to 1965. "Site and context" was the title of the first lecture in the course after the introduction. In his lecture notes dating back to 1961, Venturi emphasised the *greater whole* that architects are obliged to consider in the design of their buildings. Mentioning Gestalt psychology when defining context at a perceptual level, Venturi referred to *position* and *form* as the essential elements defining its context and meaning, as argued in his master's thesis more than a decade earlier. A year after, his lecture notes were briefly expanded, after which they remained more or less unchanged until 1965. In the lecture notes for the 1962–64 period, Venturi again introduced the perceptual level of context as a central topic to be discussed through Gestalt psychology. **(Figure 4.39)** He referred directly to the main arguments and the abstract examples he used in his master's thesis, and context and meaning in relation to *position* and *form* were further elaborated with a more detailed discussion on "setting as form and texture" and "setting as space".

In 1965, Venturi made a striking change to his lecture notes related to the definition of context that he never expressed so directly in any of his publications. The main argument of his master's thesis and the role of Gestalt psychology in the definition of context were repeated, although in addition to *position* and *form*, a third dimension of context was introduced: *sign*. **(Figure 4.40)** Therefore, adding iconography as a symbolic communicative value, Venturi expanded his spatial-formal understanding of context. In his handwritten notes, Venturi drew the same abstract Gestalt diagrams of *position* and *form* that he presented in his master's thesis in 1950. Likewise, the characteristics of *position* were represented through the conditions of proximity, interpenetration, parallel, direction, closure and succession (rhythm), and *form* through size, shape, texture-pattern, value and hue. The characteristics of the new category of *sign* were defined as: representational, formal and verbal, although iconological architecture and pop architecture were also introduced for the first time in his lecture notes on "site and context" under the category of *sign*. His lecture notes can be considered revealing, in that they show how Venturi's understanding of context as *position* and *form* was modified with the addition of *sign* as another essential category in 1965.



Appropriate Title here

512
Architecture ~~412~~
January 21, 1963/4

Outline, Lecture II: ~~The~~ Site and Context, the Inside and the Outside

Introduction: the building's setting: a comparison between Falling Water's and the Villa Rotunda's
The building as a part as well as a whole within itself
double space — Synonyms: site, setting, context, environment, neighborhood, background, field, exterior space, outside, landscape

Environment in Modern Architecture
Its role in "organic architecture"
Regionalism: Biological analogies Taliesin East ~~and~~ vs. Taliesin West
Conflict with universal form and technology of the "International Style"
Affinity with anonymous and primitive architecture
Town planning and the neighborhood: social and economic level of context in architecture
Emphases on total design: ~~Gropius~~, Neutra, the architect's obligation to the whole environment

double space — Biological level (according to Sinnott)
The relation of genetic constitution and environmental stimulus

Perceptual Level: Context: Gestalt psychology
Meaning through perception of relationships of parts or configurations
Relationships of parts to make a whole
Relationships of object and setting to give meaning
Context and meaning; change of context causes change in meaning
Context and meaning in relation to position and form
Abstract examples
Manifestations: Assemblages, Independence Hall & the Mall, the evolving setting of the Campidoglio, Bernini's obelisque in the Piazza Navona

double space

Setting as form and texture
Analogous vs. contrasting background to building in form and texture
Berenson vs. Wright on the Italian architectural landscape
Conformity with nature vs. exploitation
Visual, natural and social levels
Landscape architecture: contrast vs. camouflage
Topographical, climactic, mechanical levels
Emphasis on building as shelter within environment
Orientation: position and surface of building
Gropius, Corbusier, and indigenous architecture
Effects of sun, rain, water, wind, temperature, topography, soil conditions, light
~~Underground utilities: Kahn's city hall project~~
Effects on form of natural elements of background: sky, ground, foliage, mist
How buildings meet the ground
Solid base; columns; ground inflection; direct, "out of" vs. "on" the ground: ~~the~~ Wright's Prairie House

Setting as space
Relation of the form of the building to outside space
The building in space: ~~Radcliff Camera~~ Radcliffe Camera, Oxford
The building which makes space: New College, Oxford
The building distorted by space: Palazzo Massimo

A building as the "organization of space" in space: Eliel Saarinen
The relation of outside and inside space
Separateness vs. continuity: Johnson Wax Building vs. Barcelona Pavilion; modern flowing space vs. enclosed space; architecture of walls with holes vs. independent planes
Varying degrees and methods of separation of inside and outside, and transitions; examples
Varying degrees of contrast or ~~difference~~ contradiction between inside and outside space
Justifications for enclosed and contrasting exterior space; for vive la difference
Antagonists: Wright, Greenough, Thoreau and Sullivan
Form as a record of development in environment: D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson
The duel between private and public functions: Kepes ~~[illegible]~~ and van Eyck
Architecture as a reconciliation between inside and outside forces
Manifestations in the Baroque facade, The valid false-facade, The fragmental or dependent rather than independent building
The Villa Savoye

Figure 4.39. Venturi's lecture notes on "Site and Context", 1963–64 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.173, ARCH 512 – Course Materials (Spring, 1964).

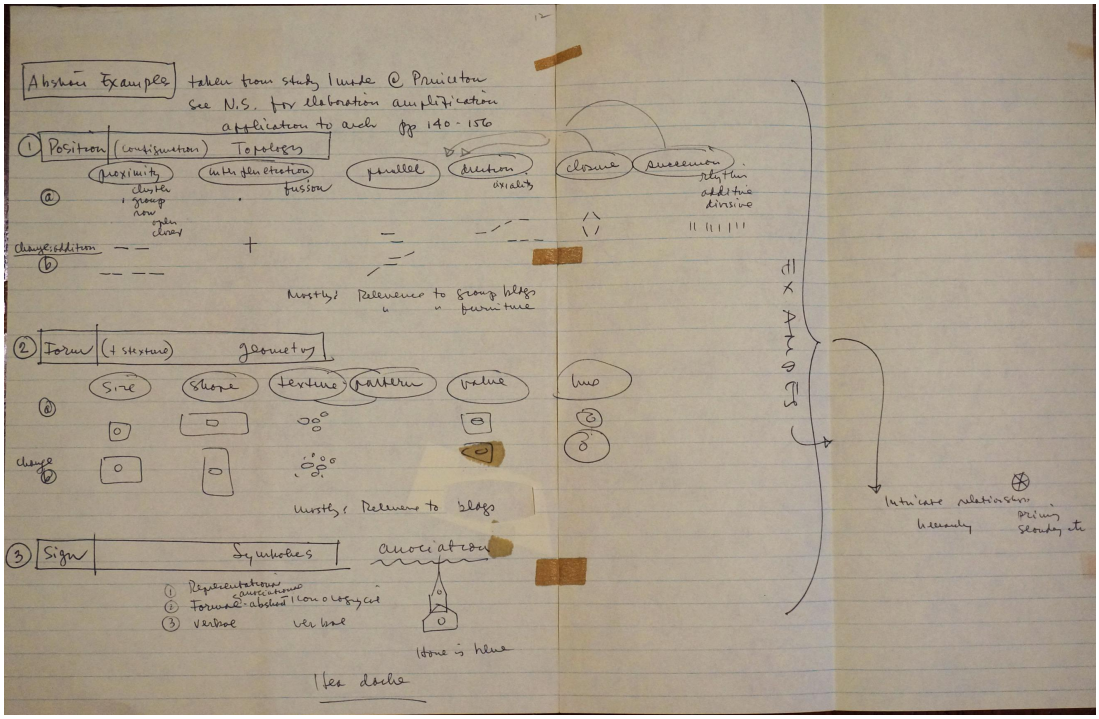


Figure 4.40. Venturi's lecture note on "Site and Context," introducing sign as the third essential category of context in addition to position and form, 1965 in Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, File: 225.RV.188, ARCH 512 – Lecture II: Site and Context, The Inside Versus the Outside (1/26/1965).

Various reasons have been suggested for Venturi's acknowledgment of symbolism in 1965 as an essential aspect of context, in addition to formal and spatial dimensions. For Venturi, 1964 was a remarkable year in which his ideas on architecture were subjected to strong influences. It was the time when the US intervention in Vietnam became harsher, which led him to question the war economy and technology and the norms of society. It was also the in which he strove with Rauch to establish his practice in a small office while trying to get commissions as a newly established firm. Venturi's anxieties as a practicing architect shaped his reaction towards the CASE group, which was initiated in 1964 to discuss the critical apparatuses of architecture. Venturi refused to consider the problem of architecture as being the lack of critical tools. For him, the problem was rather the lack of opportunities for young architects to build. Within this political, economic and disciplinary context, Venturi was looking for a way of practicing building with small budgets and differentiating his architecture from common practice. His solution was pop architecture, which was cheap to build, easy to communicate with the public and attractive to new commissions based on its novelty. Denise Scott Brown's personal interest in pop art and popular landscapes, as well as her studio on everyday commercial environments evoked, Venturi's interest on pop in the 1960s.

Venturi and Scott Brown's ideas merged in the 1960s to establish pop architecture, although their interests were different, which is also reflected in their understanding of context. In 2004, Venturi and Scott Brown published a book entitled *Architecture as Signs and Systems*, in which the notion of context was introduced as the central concern of their practice. The book

was separated clearly into two parts, with parts dedicated the persona of each of the authors in which they reflected on their own definitions of context. Venturi defined context in line with his master's thesis as something that "acknowledges the quality of a place, of a whole beyond the single building, and enhances an extended unity".[352] Scott Brown's understanding of context, on the other hand, was steered more by patterns and systems, as exemplified in their campus plans in the 1990s and 2000s. Venturi's view of spatial context can be seen as a desperate attempt to revive his earlier interest after a half century. In Venturi and Scott Brown's architectural works after the mid-1960s, easy and direct communication was favoured over the differentiated whole, and symbolic-iconographic immediacy over spatial-formal complexity. In the end, *Complexity and Contradiction's* "Gentle Manifesto" that referred to T.S. Eliot and Joseph Albers in arguing for spatial complexity evolved 30 years later into "A Not So Gentle Manifesto", proclaiming the evolution of their own architecture: "*Enfin*: iconography over expression: generic over spatial: electronic over industrial."[353]

[352] Robert Venturi, "An Evolution of Ideas," in *Architecture as Signs and Systems for a Mannerist Time,* ed. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 10.

[353] Robert Venturi, "A Not So Gentle Manifesto," in *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, ed. Robert Venturi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 16.

5. FROM LAYERS TO OBJECTS: "CONTEXT" IN THE WORKS OF COLIN ROWE

Parts of this chapter were published previously in: Esin Komez Daglioglu, "Karl Popper's Architectural Legacy: An Intertextual Reading of *Collage City*," *METU JFA* 33/1 (2016): 107-119.

"Who, but Stirling?"

Colin Rowe, an architectural critic, theoretician and teacher who was highly influential in architectural discourse, particularly in the 1970s, was absent from the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale. His name was never mentioned in the preparatory meetings, and he received no invitation to participate in the event. His name appeared in the catalogue only once, when Charles Jencks expressed his relevance to "architectural communication", which is indeed a far-fetched proposition.[354] Although Rowe himself was physically absent in the event, his ideas were present in its theoretical framing, in the criticisms it has received and in the various projects exhibited, all of which together shaped the discourse of the Biennale. For this reason, it is no surprise that in the "History, Theory, Criticism" section of the book *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America,* Louis Martin stated:

> The postmodernist moment culminated at the Venice Biennale in 1980, in an exhibition entitled "The Presence of the Past." It conjoined a semiological architecture of conventional signs and a humanist apology for historical continuity stimulated by Norberg-Schulz's concept of place with Aldo Rossi's concept of memory and Rowe's theory of context.[355]

Stirling, known as Rowe's draughtsman, was also absent from the Biennale, which even more striking than Rowe's. He was invited twice by curator Paolo Portoghesi to participate in the *Strada Novissima*, but rejected the request without giving any profound explanation,[356] and his absence was mentioned by many architects and theoreticians, being seen as the main omission from the street.[357] He was referred to in the catalogue again by Jencks, who after stating that "James Stirling's museum in Stuttgart is, like his other German projects, an essay in urban contextualism", discussed the formal and stylistic aspects of the Stuttgart Museum in detail.[358] **(Figure 5.1)** This was the only instance in the catalogue that a direct reference to *contextualism* was given. Here, Jencks defined contextualism as a postmodern expression,

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[354] Jencks' actual words were: "Again the ideas of Colin Rowe are relevant, for their dualism contains the binary logic which is essential to all communications systems. Urban form is significant partly because it consists in a serious of contiguous opposites, an obvious truth which perhaps only needs statement at a time when the environment has become too homogeneous." Charles Jencks, "Towards Radical Eclecticism," in *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture, Venice Architecture Biennale Catalogue*, ed. Gabriella Borsano, (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), 36.

[355] Louis Martin, "History, Theory, Criticism," in *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, ed. Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 343.

[356] Two telegrams sent from Stirling to Portoghesi were found in the archives of the Venice Biennale. The first, dated 10 March, 1980, stated "Regret due to work load at this time we are unable to take part in exhibition of architecture. Best wishes for the event". The second, dated 22 April, 1980, stated "Received your cable. Not participating." ASAC, Box 658.

[357] For instance, in his review of the Biennale published in Architectural Review, Peter Davey stated that "At the Arsenal opening, virtually all the Post Modern stars were there. When they all meet again, it will be at the 1984 Berlin building exhibition where James Stirling – the absent star of historical show business – will have built one of the set pieces. But Berlin will be a continuation of themes spelled out at the Arsenal – Venice is the end of the beginning." Peter Davey, "Post Modern in Venice," *The Architectural Review*1005 (1980): 134.

[358] Jencks, "Towards Radical Eclecticism," 36.

which is a matter of language and style, but what he proposed was “doubly coded” radical eclecticism as opposed to banal revivalism. Thus “heterostyle” became the strategy in the response to context, and Stirling was declared as one of the most significant figures in this approach.

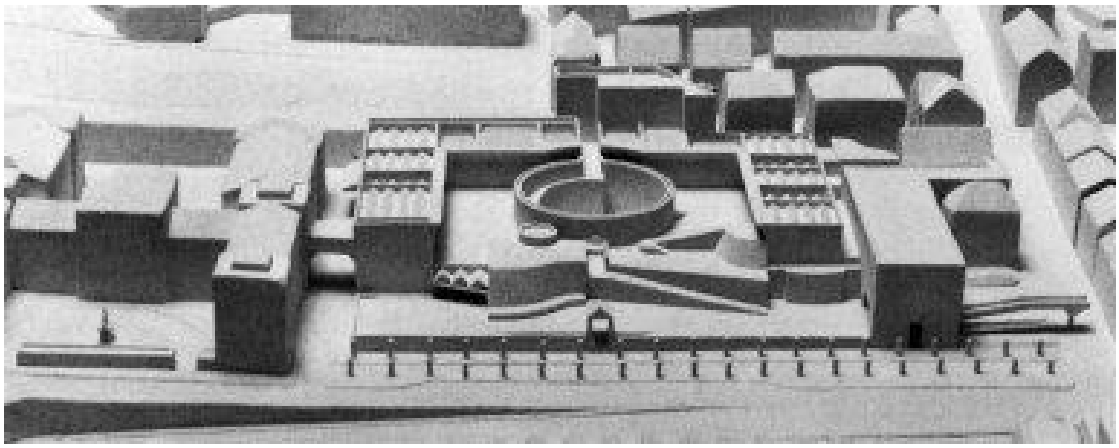

Figure 5.1. Model of the Stirling’s Stuttgart Museum. Source: http://www.quondam.com/dt97/0180.htm

It is indeed interesting that four years before the Biennale, Frampton discussed the works of Stirling in his essay “Stirling in Context”. In the essay, Frampton analysed the evolution of Stirling’s works, starting from the 1950s until the design of his Düsseldorf Museum of Modern Art competition entry, in which dependence on the broad cultural and urban context was declared to have reached its pinnacle. Frampton argued that the “exceptional urban and cultural density” of the project had been achieved through the use of “Neo-classical syntax”.[359] By using the word “syntax,” Frampton was referring directly to the understanding of architecture as a language, in which the words implied the classical typologies. Although Frampton was one of the first critics to introduce Stirling as the main figure of contextualist thought, along with Jencks, the two took totally different paths. Frampton felt extremely uncomfortable with the growing “post-modern” language that was invading the 1980 Venice Biennale, which led to his resignation from the organisation board.[360]

In October 1980, a few months later, Frampton wrote:

> The term postmodernism is ideological and its coinage as a slogan by Jencks and others surely has the aim of reducing culture to consumerism ... Aside from *certain valid criticisms made independently by Rowe and Venturi in their early contexturalism* and excepting the philistine nostalgia of Anglo-Saxon reactionaries such as Watkin and Stamp, Post-Modernism as a polemic, consciously or unconsciously intends the destruction of the resistance of architecture and its reduction to the status of one more consumer good.[361] (emphasis mine)

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[359] Kenneth Frampton, "Stirling in Context: Buildings and Projects 1950–1975,” *RIBA Journal* 83 (1976): 104.

[360] See Chapter II.

[361] Kenneth Frampton, “*Frampton,*” *Domus* 610 (1980): 26.

Frampton was highly critical of postmodern architecture, but saw Rowe's approach as a valid significant attempt. His reaction to the Biennale and its postmodern character would trigger him to develop Critical Regionalism few years after.[362] However, it is striking to see that Stirling's contextualism, which has many affinities to Rowe's contextual approach, was praised both by Jencks and Frampton, who held two distinctly opposing positions. It is also an interesting coincidence that Stirling and Frampton, the former known to be one of the star-architects of postmodernism and the latter known for his severe reactions towards it, both refused to participate in the postmodern show at the First Venice Architecture Biennale.

Stirling indeed could have been one of the participants of the Biennale, and the façade he designed with his partner Michael Wilford for the Arthur M. Sackler Museum could have been included in *Strada Novissima*, and coincidently, the project was awarded to Stirling and his partner in 1979, at the time when preparations for the 1980 Biennale were underway.[363] **(Figure 5.2)** The museum is striking in having a *representational façade* and an *inner street*, which were the two main aspects of *Strada Novissima*, and these aspects of the project can be understood in reference to the constraints of the site and the programme. First of all, the building was a necessary extension to the Fogg Museum for the hosting of its ancient, oriental and Islamic collections. The programme was extremely tight, "as the 234-page program made clear, the Fogg didn't need one building, it needed two: a five-story office and classroom building and a three-story museum."[364] Secondly, the project was located on a difficult site surrounded by such significant Harvard buildings such as the Fogg Museum, Gund Hall and the Memorial Hall, as well as the Cambridge Fire Station and apartment buildings. Quincy Street, on which the building was located, was also hosting the only Le Corbusier building in the United States, the Carpenter Center.

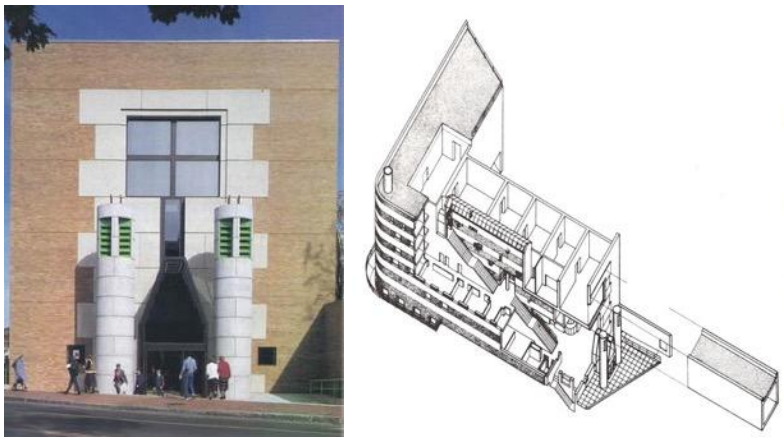

Figure 5.2. Stirling's Arthur M. Sackler Museum, photograph of the representational façade on the left and an axonometric showing the inner street on the right. Source: *The Architectural Review*, 1986, 26–27.

[362] See Chapter II.

[363] The initial sketches of the project were published in 1981 and the building was completed in 1985.

[364] Charles K. Gandee, "Best Laid Plans," *Architectural Record* March (1986): 113.

The building drew praise from critics and architects alike for its response to the programme in terms of its interior organisation, while its exterior attracted harsh criticism. The interior of the building was organised along a central inner street bounded by five-storey outward facing office spaces (looking towards Quincy Street) and three-storey exhibition spaces looking onto the courtyard. In response to the harsh criticisms of the building's exterior, Rowe published a review article in *Architectural Record* in 1986 entitled "Who, but Stirling?" to point out the virtues of the building in terms of its relationship with the site, with emphasis on the position of the entrance and its role. Rowe, like Stirling, claimed that the "entrance is in the inevitable and the only correct position", in that entering the building from Quincy Street opposite the fire station would be inappropriate, while entering from the Gund Hall side would be too far from Fogg.[365] Indeed, Stirling had designed the front façade facing Fogg Museum with an idea of combining the two buildings also physically with a bridge, and the large square window on the façade was designed specifically for the purpose of such a connection in the future. **(Figure 5.3)** The façade was further emphasised by two cylindrical columns, a Mycenaean-like door and rustications.[366] According to Rowe, this representational façade "proclaims public purpose" across from the Fogg Museum, and he claimed further that the "continuity of the street has become surprisingly affirmed" by the striped façade.[367] While positioning of the building was responding to the immediate physical context, the symbolism of the elements in the façade was referring to the formal vocabulary of the disciplinary context.

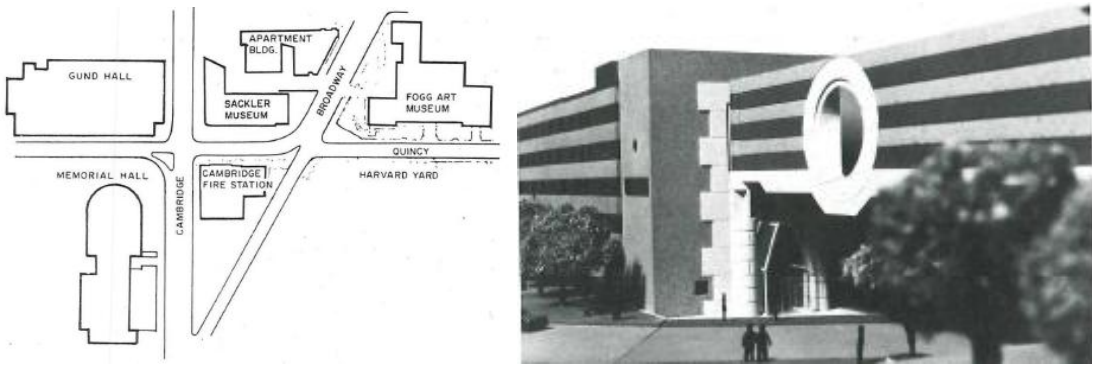

Figure 5.3. Stirling's Arthur M. Sackler Museum, site plan on the left and the proposed bridge on the right. Source: *Architectural Record*, 1986, 122 and *The Architectural Review*, 1986, 29.

In conclusion, Rowe claimed that the building's "urbanistic performance is exemplary" and "not quite the Neue Staatsgalerie at Stuttgart; but, for all that, one of the best Stirling

[365] Colin Rowe, "Who, but Stirling?" *Architectural Record* March (1986): 122.

[366] Stirling, in an interview with Michael Dennis, stated that he wanted the façade to have an Eastern rather than a Western look. His preference for an Eastern look was most probably based on the fact that building was to host an Islamic and oriental collection. Stirling also favoured the analogy of the bazaar rather than the street for the central space, again possibly as an Eastern reference. Michael Dennis interview with James Stirling, "Sackler Sequence", *The Architectural Review* (July 1986): 30.

[367] Rowe, "Who, but Stirling?" 123.

realisations to date".[368] For Rowe, therefore, it was "Who, but Stirling" that designed the "ideal" project as a contextual architect, responding both to the empirical context – the physical features of the immediate surrounding such as the street pattern, orientation, height of the neighbouring buildings, etc. – and the disciplinary context, the former by the positioning of the building in the site and the design of its façades, and the latter through the use of the typologies picked from the formal catalogue of the discipline of architecture. The use and combination of neo-classical typologies was a prominent architectural design strategy in the 1970s and 1980s, and Rowe was one of its protagonists. The examples of this approach were exhibited in the "Young Architects Section" of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale in the works of two (among 13) American architects: Stuart Cohen and Thomas H. Beeby, both of whom were students of Rowe at Cornell and were very active in the studio.[369]

In his explanatory text in the Biennale's Catalogue, Thomas Beeby stated that "younger architects in recent years have opposed the cultural arrogance inherent in modernism. History has become a desire…"[370] This was reflected in the architectural design by avoiding the use of abstract forms of Modern Architecture, and instead accommodating typologies accumulated through the history of architecture. One of his projects exhibited at the Biennale was a townhouse designed for the Kelly Gallery of Chicago, and a photograph of the project's section model was published in the Catalogue in which the use of historical formal elements and typologies were prominently visible. The use of *history* was also reflected by Stuart Cohen in his first lines of the Catalogue text, where he stated: "I do not believe in original art. Everything I make is made from those things I already know."[371] As was also visible in his project for Tudor House at Elgin published in the Catalogue, different typologies picked from the history of architecture were brought together and combined in a new way. **(Figure 5.4)**

Rowe's legacy is significant in the projects of his students that were exhibited at the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale. The hybridisations or *collages* of neoclassical typologies visible in many of Stirling's projects, especially in his German museums, can be considered a contextual act, although it is striking that reference to the empirical context was not noticeable in the exhibited projects of Beeby and Cohen, and the models give no information about the site nor the relationship of the buildings to it. In this regard, object-fixation is again at stake, only differing from the modernist one in its more eclectic formal composition. It is not an

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[368] Rowe, "Who, but Stirling?" 123.

[369] Rowe, in the introduction to the Cornelliana section of the *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays*, stated that "excepting Tom [Schumacher] and Alan [Chimacoff] and Tom Beeby and Stuart Cohen, I had only the most attenuated contacts over the drawing board with undergraduates …" Stuart Cohen was also particularly significant in the Master's studio since "the word *contextualist*, so frequently used nowadays, probably first erupted in Cornell studio conversation – always very loud – between Tom Schumacher and Stuart Cohen in 1966" as mentioned by Rowe in the introduction to *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Urbanistics.* Cohen also published an article entitled "Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it All" in 1974 in *Oppositions,* in which he emphasised the significance of physical contextualism (derived from Cornell) by comparing it to Venturi's cultural contextualism.

[370] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 84.

[371] Borsano, *The Presence of the Past*, 120.

abstract formal composition, but rather an associational one that is achieved through the use of historical forms and typologies. In such way, context can be understood to be a *history* of the field of architecture, and the answer to the question of "which history?" was given in the *Roma Interrotta* proposals.

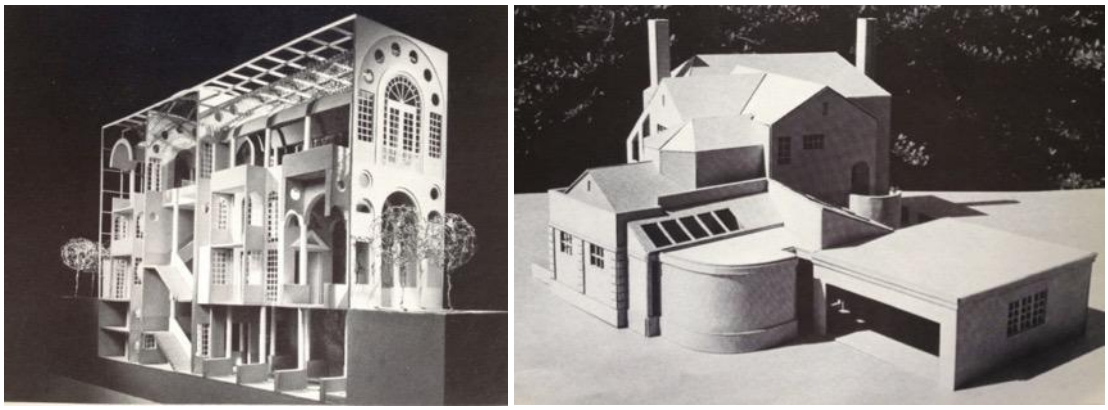

Figure 5.4. Thomas Beeby's Townhouse Project on the left and Stuart Cohen's Tudor House Project on the right. Source: Borsano, *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture*, 84–120.

Colin Rowe at *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition

Colin Rowe, with his team of Peter Carl, Judith Dimaio and Steven Peterson, designed the "most Roman" proposal in the *Roma Interrotta* Exhibition.[372] **(Figure 5.5)** Using the representational method adopted in the original Nolli figure-ground drawings, Rowe extended the urban texture of 18th-century Rome. One of the more outstanding features of the Nolli map, depicting civic and religious structures in white as successive urban spaces while rendering housing and commercial structures black as an urban *poché,* was adopted also by Rowe and his team as the main design strategy. Steven Peterson summarised the "Urban Design Tactics" used by the team as the use of "separate prototypical structures" for the uninhabited hills in their sector (namely Aventine, Palatine and Celio), designing buildings with courtyards (as composite block forms) to achieve a "sequential variety of spaces", and providing visual and conceptual links with the city outside the plate.[373] By using these tactics, old Rome was extended naturally into the plate through the use of streets, squares and composite urban blocks as the main elements of design.

[372] For general information about the *Roma Interrotta* exhibition, see Chapter III.

[373] Steven Peterson, "Urban Design Tactics," *AD Profiles* 20 (1979): 76–82.

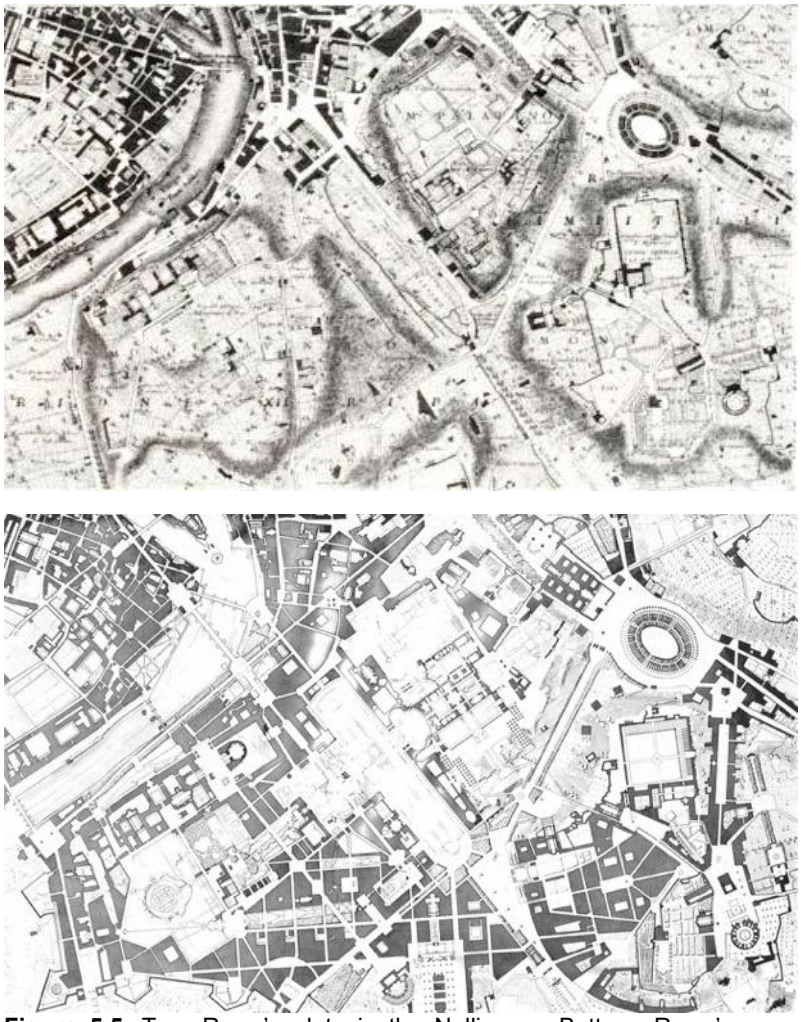

Figure 5.5. Top: Rowe's plate in the Nolli map. Bottom: Rowe's proposal for the *Roma Interrotta*. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 142–143.

Stirling, on the other hand, took a different path to his master and life-long friend Rowe, using neither the figure-ground representational method of the Nolli map, nor the urban texture of 18th-century Rome. **(Figure 5.6)** Instead, he brought together fragments of his unrealised projects, which was 30 out of 50 at that time, plus his 50th birthday cake, and drew them with deeply shaded lines. What was striking, though not surprising, was his reference to Rowe in his explanatory text of the design:

> This 'contextural-associational' way of planning is somewhat akin to the historic process (albeit timeless) by which the creation of built form is directly influenced by the visual setting and is a confirmation and complement to that which exists. This process may be similar to that of 'Collage City', (and the teachings of C. Rowe)…[374]

The word contexturalism, derived originally from a combination of the Latin words *con* (together) and *texere* (weave) was first appeared in the early years of Rowe's Cornell Urban

[374] James Stirling, "Revisions to the Nolli Plan of Rome (the MFA solution) and Notes Towards the Demise of the Post-War Planning Profession," in *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome*, (Roma: Johan & Levi Editore, 2014), 87.

Design studio and later evolved into contextualism.[375] Borrowing this notion from Rowe, Stirling claimed that his design was "contextural-associational" in the sense of its use of the "forms and shapes which the everyday public can associate with and be *familiar* with – and *identify* with", as he explained further in a footnote.[376] In fact, the use of his own works may perhaps be associational only to himself and sit in the context of his own profession. He did not consider the Nolli Map, nor 18th-century Rome, as a formal and representative context to work with, as Rowe had, but instead took it as a site plan on which to inject fragments of his own design. In this respect, his composition of the fragments and his drawing technique fit more to Piranesi's Campo Marzio than Nolli's map.[377]

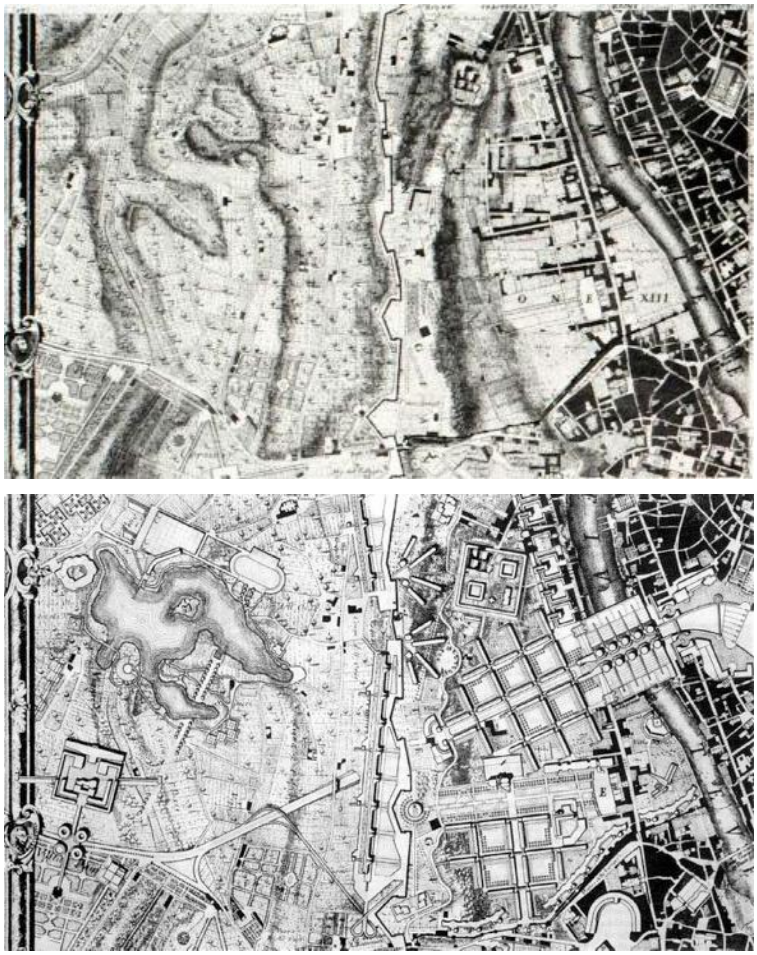

Figure 5.6. Top: Stirling's plate in the Nolli map. Bottom: Stirling's proposal for the *Roma Interrotta*. Source: *Roma Interrotta: Twelve Interventions on the Nolli's Plan of Rome in the MAXXI Architettura Collections*, 90–91.

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[375] Sandy Isenstadt provided another interpretation of the word context, stating that "The Indo-European root *teks* also means to weave, as in wicker, or to make wattle-and-daub structures. The person who makes wattle is called the *tekson*, or *tekton* in Greek, from which we get *tectonic*, and the master of all things tectonic is the *arch-tekton*, or *architect*." Sandy Isenstadt, "Contested Contexts," in *Site Matters*, ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn (New York: Routledge, 2005), 160.

[376] Stirling, "Revisions to the Nolli Plan of Rome," 87.

[377] Giovan Battista Piranesi's Campo Marzio, which dates back to 1762, does not represent the Rome of the time, nor does it use the figure-ground technique. Instead, it traces ancient Rome not to represent the truth, but to project a fictional idea of what it may have looked like. For this reason, he drew urban fragments that were precise, yet impossible.

The reason Rowe chose the Nolli Map and 18th-century Rome as his context for the exhibition was not based only on its formal and representational character, but also its socio-political statement. In his explanatory notes of *Roma Interrotta* published two decades after the exhibition, he argued that:

> The program for the exhibition was based … upon the argument that, after Nolli, the urban tissue of Rome had been 'interrupted', that is, that something assumed implicit in the urban tissue of Rome had become lost. In other words, since nothing very important in Rome had happened between 1748 and 1870 – except for Vladier's intervention in the Piazza del Popolo – the exhibition was an ostensible critique of urbanistic goings-on since the overthrow of the temporal power of the Papacy.
> Participants – many of whom, I think, failed to understand the message …[378]

Indeed, the Nolli map was a project that had been commissioned by Pope Clement XII, the then head of the Papal state. In an article published in AD's special issue on *Roma Interrotta*, Giulia Aurigenma said that Nolli had been assigned to produce "a precise technical work clearly intended by the Pope for the rational reorganisation of the city's social and juridical administration through a finalised plan".[379] In this regard, *Nuova Pianta* was a *project* for the city, for the city of Rome, the capital of the Papal state, and was "a conscious attempt to project the image of a capital".[380]

Colin Rowe was aware of the socio-political connotation of the Nolli map, since in his fictional history, written as the project brief, he depicted the post-Nolli city as the capital of Napoleon Bonaparte's empire. In this regard, his intervention into the Nolli Map was an imagined Rome that could have been, supported by an invented history.[381] Grounded on the Nolli map, Rowe's proposal, as well as the brief of *Roma Interrotta*, defined Papal Rome is an "ideal city" that could be instrumentalised as a *project* of contemporary urbanism of Rome. In other words, post-Nolli developments, specifically Modernist planning, were at the centre of the underlying criticisms, being accused of interrupting the organic development of the city. The lack of a functional demand or brief in *Roma Interrotta* was also an attempt to liberate architects and planners from the programmatic reasoning associated with Modernist Urbanism. In summary, the Nolli Map, which was a project for the Papal capital city, was reinterpreted by Rowe as a project for contemporary urbanism. This led Rowe to take the urban texture of Baroque Rome – as depicted in Nolli's black and white drawings – as a model for an ideal urban development in his *Roma Interrotta* project. Indeed Nolli's Rome was not only a paradigm for *Roma Interrotta,* but was also a vibrant inspiration for Rowe's *Collage City* proposal and his Cornell Studio teachings.

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[378] Colin Rowe, "*Roma Interrotta,"* in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol III: Urbanistics,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996): 127–129.

[379] Giulia Aurigenma, "Giovan Battista Nolli," *AD Profiles* 20 (1979): 27.

[380] Maarten Delbeke, "Roma Interrotta: Baroque Rome as a (Post)Modernist Model," *OASE* 86 (2011): 83.

[381] Rowe stated that "our fictive history has, for the most part, been an alibi for a topographical and contextual concern". Colin Rowe, "*Roma Interrotta,"* 152.

Collage City

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter published their *Collage City* first in a special issue of *The Architectural Review* in 1975, and later as a book in 1978. *Collage City* has, since its publication, been one of the most elaborate and stimulating critiques of Modernist city planning and architecture. "Physics envy, *Zeitgeist* worship, object fixation, and stradaphobia" were defined as the major problems with modernist urbanism,[382] and so modernist cities are therefore characterised as "the city in the park" with emphasis on the totalistic design of object-like free-standing buildings located on vast open areas. The model was criticised for not having the qualities of urban texture or the density of traditional cities, being a "city of defined voids", characterised by the incremental design of successive open and public spaces. Rowe and Koetter proposed *Collage City* as a new model for urban design, as a "radical middle" that accommodates both "the ideal" and "the real", "utopia" and "tradition", "theatre of prophecy" and "theatres of memory", "modern city" and "traditional city", "general statement" and "specific", "archetype" and "accident", and "overtly planned" and "the genuinely unplanned".[383] To achieve this, they took 18th-century Rome as a model, which was *the paradigm* for Rowe, even before the *Roma Interrotta* project.

The authors stated in *Collage City* that "… Rome, whether imperial or papal, hard or soft, is here offered as some sort of model which might be envisaged as alternative to the disastrous urbanism of social engineering and total design".[384] In this regard, imperial Rome or baroque Rome was taken as a model not only for Rome itself, as in the *Roma Interrotta* project, but also for contemporary urbanism. Rowe and Koetter discussed baroque Rome as a representative *collision city,* with its simultaneous "dialectic of ideal types plus a dialectic of ideal types with empirical context".[385] In fact, William Ellis, in his article "Type and Context in Urbanism: Colin Rowe's Contextualism", published in 1979, claimed that Rowe's intention to reconcile the traditional and modern city was actually an "argument between type and context".[386] This argument is most explicit in the article "Program versus Paradigm", delivered as a lecture by Rowe in 1980, and later published in the third issue of the *Cornell Journal of Architecture*. In the article, Rowe defined the emphasis on empirical context through *data addiction* as the "worship of program", and *excessive typological concern* as the "worship of

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[382] These notions were elaborated by Rowe in his article titled "The Present Urban Predicament," in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol III: Urbanistics,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996): 165-220.

[383] Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1978).

[384] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 107.

[385] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 106.

[386] William Ellis, "Type and Context in Urbanism: Colin Rowe's Contextualism," in *Oppositions Reader*: *Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture, 1973–1984,* ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 228.

paradigm", the first exemplifying the "false empiricism" of modernist architecture, and the latter, the "false idealism" of Italian neo-rationalism.[387] Rather than glorifying one over the other, Rowe was searching for a dialectical solution that could operate between type and context.

Rowe and Koetter's argument for the first of these seems to be a reaction to both the (functionalists') rejection of type and finiteness of the (Beau-Arts) *parti*.[388] Putting the plan of Palazzo Borghese next to Palazzo Farnese, the authors sought to show how "archetype and accident" could exist together by manipulating the ideal types "according to the exigencies of circumstances".[389] **(Figure 5.7)** From this perspective, buildings do not act as free-standing objects, but rather mediate with their surroundings. This approach became more prominent when buildings started to be treated as urban *poché,* as suggested in the Nolli's map. In this respect, *poché*, a significant architectural element of a *parti*, could itself refer to architecture in an urban setting. Rowe and Koetter argued that "a building itself may become a type of *poché*, for certain purposes a solid assisting the legibility of adjacent spaces".[390] By distorting, both literally and conceptually, the *parti* and *poché* – the skeletons of Beaux-Arts education – Rowe, on the one hand, was able to dwell on a core architectural tradition, and on the other, relate them to the present conditions.

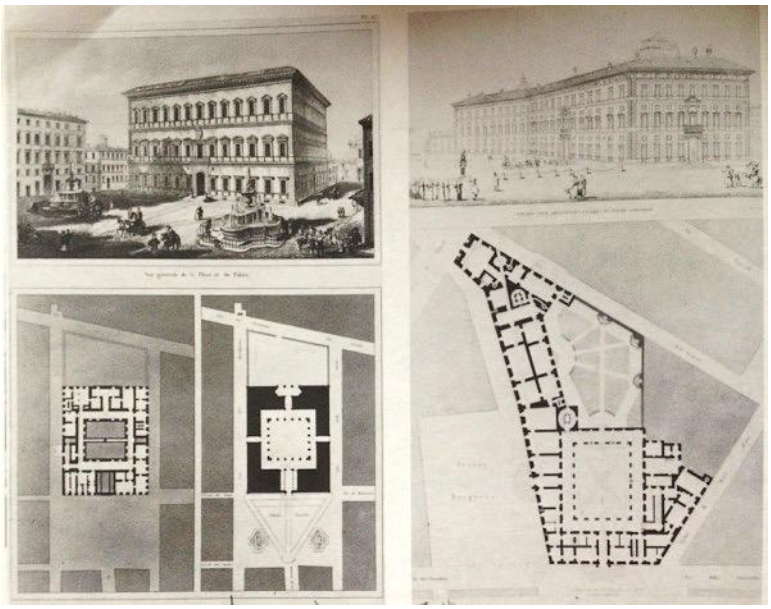

Figure 5.7. Palazzo Farnese on the left and Palazzo Borghese on the right. Source: Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 76.

[387] Colin Rowe, "Program versus Paradigm: Otherwise Casual Notes on the Pragmatic, the Typical, and the Possible," in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol II: Cornelliana,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996): 7–41.

[388] Rowe was critical of Beaux-Arts tradition and its remnants at the academia. In the Introduction to *As I Was Saying, Cornelliana*, he stated how he was hated by the "strange academic dinosaurs of late Beaux-Arts origin".

[389] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 106.

[390] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 79.

The criticism of object-like buildings pushed Rowe to search for an urban architectural design approach, while the criticism of the totalitarian character of modernist planning triggered the birth of urban design. In this respect, *Collage City* can be considered as a solution between *total design* and *object-fixation*. Incremental development, accumulations of fragments and ad-hoc relations between ideal types were proposed as a successful urban model, with Hadrian's Villa introduced as an example.[391] **(Figure 5.8)** In the light of this, Rowe approached the design of buildings as set-pieces, as a composite form that was achieved through a *collage* of ideal types and their distortion. Accordingly, collage, which has been a significant approach in art since the beginning of the last century, became an architectural design strategy.[392] As exemplified in Picasso's *Bull's Head*, to which Rowe himself refers, different elements were seduced out of their contexts and re-arranged to gain new different meanings. In Rowe's architectural theory, pulling apart ideal types and re-arranging them using a collage technique makes not only the form but also the time *composite*, referring to a synchronic rather than diachronic understanding of time.[393] In other words, elements of the past and present can simultaneously be present today. This statement contains two counter-arguments to Modern Architecture, asserted first by identifying a catalogue of historical and traditional objects for architecture design, as visible in the "Excursus" of the book in which the "possible *objects trouvés*" of an "urbanistic collage" were presented, and second by identifying time as composite rather than linearly progressive.

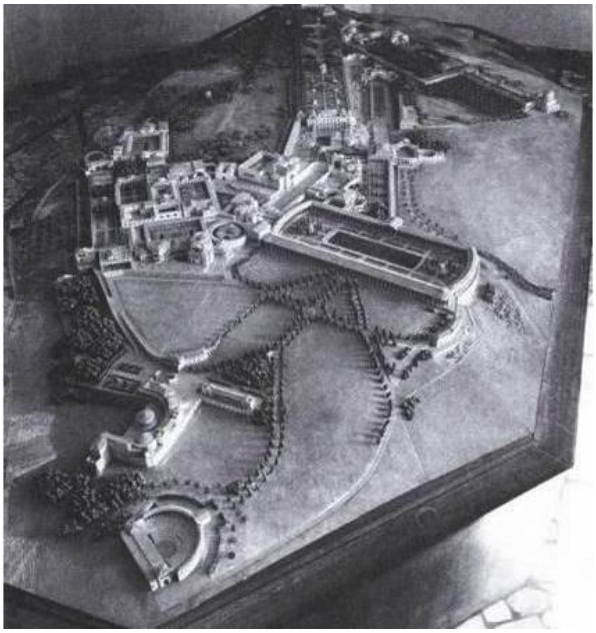

Figure 5.8. View of the model of Hadrian's Villa. Source: Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 90.

[391] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 90.

[392] Collage, as an artists' technique, was first used at the beginning of the 20th century, with Picasso being one of the leading proponents of the technique, beginning with his *Still Life with Chair Caning* painting in 1912. For an inspirational reading on Picasso's use of collage, see Rosalind E. Krauss' article "In the Name of Picasso."

[393] Composite time is also visible in Aldo Rossi's analogous architecture (See chapter III). However, different from Rossi, Rowe brings typologies together to achieve composite form.

As to oppose a free-standing object, Rowe proposed composite building or set-pieces designed through a collage of ideal types; but how these types could be composed? Or what makes a collage object better than a single, fixed object? Here, the notion of context enters as a central argument. Opposing modernist urbanism's approach of taking the site as a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet, Rowe focused on the urban tissue of traditional cities, specifically on the formal *texture* of cities, namely the urban fabrics, which can best be depicted in figure-ground plans. This points to an original meaning of contextu(r)alism *weaving together*, which in the figure-ground maps of traditional cities refers to the intertwined relation of solids and voids. In addition to Nolli's map, the use of figure-ground maps was also directly related to Gestalt principles, which Rowe mentioned a number of times in *Collage City*. Fluctuating readings of the figure and ground in Gestalt diagrams were used to elaborate the characteristics of the urban fabric of modernist and traditional cities, with figure being the buildings in the former, and spaces in the latter.[394] **(Figure 5.9)** Context, as suggested in *Collage City*, is defined as the formal pattern of the built environment, as represented in figure-ground maps. In this regard, it was argued that the contextual approach created a well-balanced urban fabric of solids and voids, which could be achieved, as mentioned previously, by designing buildings as composite forms involving both solids and voids, and/or urban *poché* solid substantiating voids.

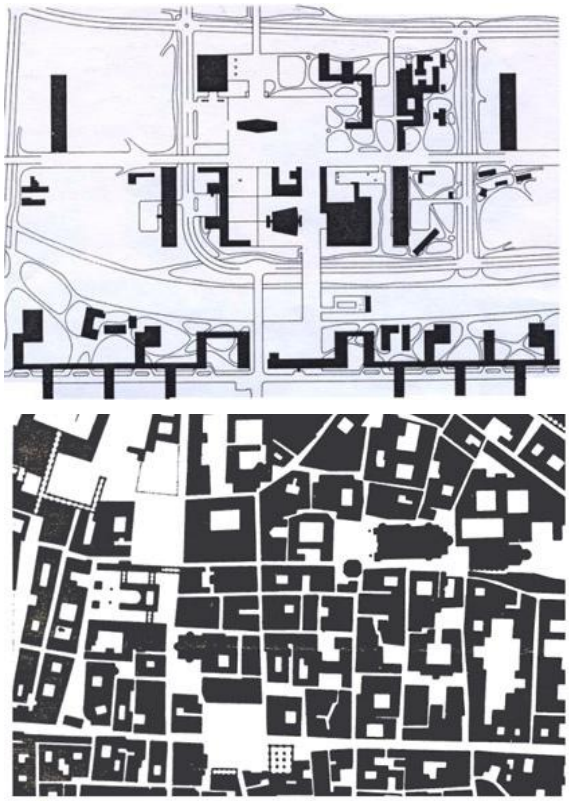

Figure 5.9. Figure-ground plans of Le Corbusier's project for Saint Dié at the top and Parma at the bottom. Source: Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 62–63.

[394] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 62.

Intermezzo: Karl Popper and the Critique of Historicism and Utopia

Karl Popper, the Austrian born British philosopher, was one of the most inspiring and controversial thinkers of the 20th century and a disputed Western Cold-War ideologist. His major contributions were in the realm of the philosophy of science, where he proposed falsification as a method for the development and testing of scientific knowledge, as opposed to induction. Founding the Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method at London School of Economics (LSE) in 1946 and influencing many philosophers working on scientific knowledge and methods, specifically Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend, Popper is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of science of the 20th century. On the other hand, Popper's image is rather controversial in the realm of political philosophy. A supporter of Marxist ideology and a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria in his youth, Popper later became one of the fiercest critics of the utopian aspects of Marxism, and his defence of liberal democracy as a condition of an open society has been considered by many scholars and critics to have been the foundation for conservative politics.

Colin Rowe's urban architectural theory, as expressed in *Collage City,* and his preceding teachings at Cornell studio were highly influenced by the works of Popper, although there are only a few sources mentioning this influence, with no vivid interpretation being provided until now. Accordingly, an intertextual reading of *Collage City* and works of Popper can situate Rowe's approach in a broader intellectual context and socio-political agenda. In fact, Rowe had been familiar with Popper's ideas since the early years of his career, in that his instructor Wittkower at Warburg (during 1945–46) had introduced him to such German-speaking intellectuals as Popper and Ernst Gombrich.[395] Although Rowe was acquainted with Popper's philosophical thoughts from Warburg, there are hardly any references to him in Rowe's early writings, and it would seem that Popper became influential for Rowe in the 1960s when his seminal books *The Poverty of Historicism* and *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* were translated into English in 1957 and 1959 respectively, and when the *Conjectures and Refutations* was published in 1963.

One of Popper's first significant publications was *The Poverty of Historicism,* the title alluding to Marx's book *The Poverty of Philosophy*, which in turn referred to Proudhon's *Philosophy of Poverty*. Historicism was a key notion for Popper when establishing his critique of totalitarian and utopian political approaches.[396] *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* defines historicism as a methodological and epistemological doctrine that alters the positivist

[395] Ernst Gombrich was also a research fellow and lecturer during that period in Warburg. Gombrich was a life-long friend of Popper who helped in the publication of his *Open Society and Its Enemies.* The book includes a text written by Gombrich on his relationship with Popper and the story of the publication (added in 2002). Ernst H. Gombrich, "Personal Recollections of the Publication of the Open Society," in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, ed. Karl Popper (London: Routledge, 2011), xvii-xxviii.

[396] *The Poverty of Historicism* was first read at a private meeting in 1936, then published as a journal article in 1944, and finally as a book in 1957.

approach in search of natural laws in the human sciences by emphasizing the role of historical occurrences.[397] However, no single, definite and unitary definition of historicism has been formed since its appearance in the 17th century, and Popper's approach distinguished itself by defining historicism as a method used in the social sciences.[398] Popper criticised historicism harshly as a "poor method", "an approach to the social sciences which assumes that *historical prediction* is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns', the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history".[399] Defining historicism as a method, he criticised it for replacing "natural laws" with "historical laws", which according to him was not a profound method for understanding, explaining and developing scientific knowledge.

Historicism is also a highly charged term in architecture, although its interpretation in philosophy and architecture has been quite different. Architectural historian, critic and teacher Alan Colquhoun's essay "Three Kinds of Historicism" is a seminal article identifying and defining different understandings of historicism, covering also its architectural interpretations. According to Colquhoun, there are three major conceptualisations of historicism: "(1) the theory that all sociocultural phenomena are historically determined and that all truths are relative; (2) concern for the institutions and traditions of the past; and (3) the use of historical forms (e g in architecture)". [400] Although Colquhoun did not mention Popper in his paper, it is clear from his definitions that the first category stands for the philosophical, specifically, the Popperian interpretation, of historicism. According to Colquhoun, historicism in architecture, as defined in categories 2 and 3, belongs to a broader category of the historical phenomena and is not bound to category 1 of historical determinism. In this respect, Popperian historicism is not related directly to architectural historicism, and so is not topical in the field of architecture. That said, historicism was the basis of his critique of utopia and the exaltation of tradition, which had a substantial influence on Rowe's urban architectural theory.

The central argument of Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* has been acknowledged mainly as "historicism", as suggested by the title. Indeed, for Popper, historicism was merely an instrumental concept for a critique of "utopia", which appeared to be his primary concern. By defining historicism slightly differently to previous attempts, Popper was able to claim that historicism has an "unholy alliance with utopianism".[401] What brings historicism and utopianism together is the fact that they were both defined as holistic and totalitarian doctrines. Popper wrote, "both the historicist and the Utopianist believe that they can find out

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[397] Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 331.

[398] For a detailed discussion on the different definitions and connotations of historicism in philosophy, see Andrew Reynolds' article "What is Historicism?" which provides a general overview of the distinct uses of the term from Giambattista Vico to Hilary Putnam.

[399] Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

[400] Alan Colquhoun, *Three Kinds of Historicism*, *Architectural Design* 9/10 (1983): 86–90.

[401] Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 65.

what the true aims or ends of 'society' are; for example, by determining its historical tendencies, or by diagnosing 'the needs of their time'."[402] It can be understood then that both the historicist and the utopianist are in search of universal laws and generalisations, the former by seeking the definitive historical development, and the latter by seeking the ultimate future progression. By applying this definition, Popper argued in his book *Open Society and Its Enemies* that Plato, Marx and Hegel were the greatest enemies of democracy and open society.

In *Collage City,* Rowe and Koetter stated, "… in our own interpretation of the activist utopia our indebtedness to Popper's position should be evident".[403] Utopia was a key concept for Rowe in his criticism of the totalitarian character of Modernist city planning and in his development of an alternative urban design approach. In fact, Rowe's interest in the notion of utopia was clearly apparent in his article "The Architecture of Utopia", published in the student journal *Granta* in 1959, preceding *Collage City* by 20 years. By referring to the various city visions, beginning from the Renaissance (e.g., Filarete's *Sforzinda* and Scamozzi's *Palma Nova*) and continuing up to modern architecture (e.g., Chiatton's *Futurist City* and Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin*), Rowe showed how "utopia and the image of a city are inseparable", and how utopia is attached to the "classical image of changelessness".[404] He criticised utopian cities for being independent of time, place and history, and emphasised his interest on "concrete and the specific", "things as found", "empirical fact", "data collection", etc. Rowe made no reference to Popper in his original essay, but finally made an explicit reference in the addendum of an essay he wrote in 1973 in which he criticised the other contributors to the journal for overlooking Popper, while also putting Popper down for his complete rejection of utopia. Rowe concluded the addendum by stating, "… utopia will persist – but should persist as possible social metaphor rather than probable social prescription".[405]

Following his criticism of historicism and utopia, Popper introduced the notion of tradition to explain and interpret the development of scientific knowledge. According to Popper, scientific progress is based on tradition, in that scientists should continue from earlier developments and carry on a certain tradition. In his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Popper proposed a new scientific method to oppose induction. He criticised the method of induction, claiming that experiments and observations cannot lead to theories, and that "theories are not verifiable, but they can be 'corroborated'."[406] For Popper, science develops through "conjectures" and "refutations", or in other words, a hypothesis is the point of departure in

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[402] Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 68.

[403] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 95.

[404] Colin Rowe, "The Architecture of Utopia," in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, ed. Colin Rowe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 205–223.

[405] Rowe, "The Architecture of Utopia," 216.

[406] Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 248.

problem solving, not observations or experiments. It is not possible to justify or verify a hypothesis, but only to test it by trying to refute it. In this respect, scientific progress is based on the falsifiability of hypotheses, while science is about discovering new problems, not making its answers "final". Popper's rejection of utopia was also reflected in his scientific method, in that he implied that there is no "ultimately true" or "ideal" theory in science; an attitude that Thomas Kuhn claimed would make science impossible, and perhaps architecture too, which is somewhat different to the sciences that Popper was addressing for seeking final concrete form.

Popper himself did not mention architecture or urbanism in his writings, but instead attacked grand philosophers and their ideas for being the enemies of open society, due either to their historicist or utopian approaches, or a combination of the two. Since historicism and utopianism were considered by Popper to be deterministic, totalitarian and holistic, Rowe was able to use these notions in his critiques of modern architecture and urbanism. Rowe took Popper's definitions of historicism and utopianism as representative of both the discursive and formal aspects of modern architecture and urbanism, and associated his concept of tradition with the character of the traditional city. As *Collage City* argued:

> … Popper, the apostle of scientific rigour, further represents himself as the critic of utopia and the exponent of tradition's usefulness; and it is in these identical terms that he may also be seen to emerge as, by implication, the greatest of critics of modern architecture and urbanism (though in practice it might be doubted whether he possesses the technical capacity, or the interest, to criticize either).[407]

Hence, the final chapter of *Collage City* begins with a quotation from Popper that concludes: "… in science we want to make progress, and this means that we must stand on the shoulders of our predecessors. We must carry on a certain tradition …"[408] Mentioning the importance of tradition as a critical tool for the development of society, Rowe and Koetter defined "the role of traditions in society [as] roughly equivalent to that of hypothesis in science",[409] although they were also critical of tradition, in that they believed that "the abuses of tradition are surely not any less great than the abuses of utopia …"[410] They criticised Popper with claims that "his evaluations of utopia and tradition seem to present irreconcilable styles of critical involvement", and Rowe sought rather to develop an urban architectural theory that could reconcile tradition and utopia.[411]

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[407] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 122.

[408] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 118.

[409] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 122.

[410] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 124.

[411] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 124.

Transposing Popper's ideas to architecture was not a straightjacket for Rowe, as he was conceptually in a constant struggle with Popper's ideas. Rowe was looking for an in-between solution between the utopian modernist city and the traditional city, since neither of them alone could be a model for contemporary urbanism. The traditional city is inappropriate today in terms of its scale and size, while the modernist city falls short of creating lively urban environments, in that buildings are designed as objects, as space-occupiers, rather than as space-definers. In this regard, Rowe was looking for a design model that could bring together the urban character of the traditional city and the utopian component of the modernist city. It is striking to note that Rowe's solution to the reconciliation of tradition and utopia was again grounded on an idea of Popper, being piecemeal social engineering and a Gestaltian understanding of the whole. These two categories make it clear that the underlying problem of architecture and urbanism was defined as the "problem of the whole" for which Rowe sought to develop his own personal response.

Popper, in his *The Poverty of Historicism*, criticised social engineering for "remodeling the 'whole of society' in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint".[412] Opposing the holistic social engineer, Popper proposed a "piecemeal social engineer" who attempts to achieve his ends "by small adjustments and readjustments which can be continually improved upon".[413] A piecemeal social engineer does not seek abstract goods and the entire transformation of society, but rather fights concrete evils to improve the existing social institutions. Against the modernist architects' role as a social engineer, Rowe introduced the notion of *bricoleur,* borrowing the term from French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In short, an architect, like a *bricoleur*, can construct bricolages with whatever materials are to hand. In this respect, Popper's concept of piecemeal-engineer is visible in Rowe's urban design approach, attained through the use of a collage technique in the design of the set-pieces.

But on what grounds will the fragments of collage come together and establish a *whole* that is not holistic in the sense of utopian and historicist totalitarianism? This brings us back once again to Popper, who distinguished between two types of whole: "(*a*) the totality of all the properties or aspects of a thing, and especially of all the relations between its constituent parts, and (*b*) certain special properties or aspects of the thing in question, namely those which make it appear an organised structure rather than a 'mere heap'."[414] Popper claimed, whole in the sense (b) is the characteristics of Gestalt psychology and it has to be favoured as oppose to the understanding of whole in the sense of (a). The reason for this is that through Gestalt, one focuses on *certain specific aspects* of the whole and does not see the whole as the totality of all aggregates. On the other hand, the understanding of the whole in the sense of (a) is problematic, being totalitarian in its efforts to define and determine *all* the

[412] Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 61.

[413] Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 61.

[414] Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 71.

constituent parts and *all* their relations. In fact, Rowe's connection with Gestalt can be identified even in his earliest works, even before Popper became an influential figure for him. However, in *Collage City*, one single prominent dimension of the Gestalt principles was applied with emphasis on the figure-ground relation. In Rowe's approach, the Gestaltian understanding of whole was utilised to attain balanced figure-ground urban plans.

In the end, Popper was proposing piecemeal social engineering and a Gestaltian understanding of the whole as tools for the attainment of open and liberal societies. In this sense, I argue that *Collage City* – as the architectural manifestation of Popper's ideas – was actually a *project* for an open and liberal society. The collage technique and figure-ground maps were strategies for giving literal form to the spaces of open, democratic and liberal societies. As Rowe put it later, but more explicitly, his proposal was about the city, about public life and public space, and he was pondering the question of "how to make a city if all buildings proclaim themselves as objects, and how many object-buildings can be aggregated before comprehension fails?"[415] Accordingly, it was 18th-century Rome and Nolli's map – not the Piranesi's Campo Marzio – that was taken as the model, in that architecture was not defined as the design of single artefacts but rather as an urban *poché* with the potential to define and create the civic spaces of democratic societies.[416]

Cornell Urban Design Studio

Collage City may be considered a product of Rowe's Cornell studio teachings, as he himself stated, "What may be imagined to be the content of this course is extensively written about in Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* …"[417] Rowe initiated an Urban Design Studio at Cornell in 1963 that he taught until the end of the 1980s. This was one of the rare studios in the field of architecture, and the results have been published, exhibited and disseminated extensively in international platforms. Although the students of the studio wrote much about its pedagogical model, no publication has explained it better than Rowe did at the faculty meeting held in winter 1963–64. As shown in a manuscript from the Cornell University Archives, members of the College of Architecture Department of Design of Cornell University came together to discuss "the teaching of design in new architectural curriculum". After an introduction by Peter Floyd, T. Canfield, Lee Hodgden, Colin Rowe and Martin Dominguez presented their statements, each of which was followed by a discussion.

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[415] Rowe, "The Present Urban Predicament," 171.

[416] For a counter-position, see: Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

[417] Colin Rowe, "Introduction," in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. III: Urbanistics,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 2.

In his speech, Rowe defined the aims of an "academy" using this word specifically, since he argued that a school of architecture "is committed to an absolute belief in the possibility of knowledge, and that it is possible and profitable to dispute about taste" – to be as follows:

> I. To equip the student with skills necessary for the practice of his profession.
> II. To enable him to develop his powers of selection by the process of his own judgment, and to develop and ultimately teach the SCIENCE of architecture. Here I mean science as Alberti or Palladio used the term.[418]

Rowe argued for the development of the *science* of architecture by preparing a dictionary containing a *vocabulary of hypotheses* that could be used for the *ignition of the design engine*. In other words, he believed that a design process – the term he actually disliked – cannot begin only as a result of intuition, creative furore or accident, nor by a logical process, fact-finding or problem-solving behaviour. He argued rather that the vocabulary of past forms can work like hypotheses in igniting the design engine, and he expressed this again later in *Collage City*, "… the role of traditions in society [as] roughly equivalent to that of hypothesis in science".[419] In this regard, tradition is understood as past forms that are made relevant today through visual studies cultivated by historical knowledge, which Rowe himself showed in his master thesis on "The Theoretical Drawings of Inigo Jones", as well as in his first publications, such as the "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa."[420]

Developing the science of architecture was Rowe's main concern in the Cornell Urban Design Studio, and Popper's scientific method of "conjectures and refutations" inspired him when shaping his pedagogical approach. Steven Hurtt, in his article reviewing the two decades of student projects that came out of the Cornell Urban Design Studio, stated: "Through Rowe, the studio was influenced toward Karl Popper's Conjectures and Refutations. Popper's argument forms the basis for a process that accepts, even demands, hypothesis as a point of departure …"[421] From this perspective, design begins with assumptions, not with a data analysis, and for Rowe, these assumptions were at a formal rather that social, cultural or programmatic level. Rowe was critical of modernism's functional determinism, "… if he [the student of function] is to build a soap factory, will discover all about the process of soap manufacture and who, if he is to build a nursery school, will promptly acquire the most intensive knowledge of kindergarten practice".[422] Not believing in the relevance of

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[418] Colin Rowe, "Third Speaker" in *The Teaching of Design in New Architectural Curriculum*, 1963–64. Typescript Manuscript, Cornell University Archives, Oswald Mathias Ungers Papers, Box 2, Folder: New York City Program, Collection nr: 15-2-2035.

[419] Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 122.

[420] For a more detailed study on the origins of Rowe's architectural thinking, see: Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 61-106.

[421] Steven Hurtt, "Conjectures on Urban Form: The Cornell Urban Design Studio 1963-1982," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* 2 (1983): 55.

[422] Colin Rowe, "Architectural Education in the USA: Issues, Ideas, and People. A Conference to Explore Current Alternatives," *Lotus International* 27 (1980): 43.

programmatic studies to ignite the design process, Rowe seldom provided briefs in his design studio, as was reported by his students.[423]

The precepts of Rowe's Urban Design Studio's contextualism were first disseminated through the writings of the students in the early 1970s. Tom Schumacher, in his 1971 essay "Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations", criticised the tradition of designing a building "isolated from its neighbors, multi-sided and without preferential faces", which can be observed in modern architecture, and dates back to Palladio.[424] Interestingly, his paper also shows the impact of Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction* in the studio, stating:

> The notion that some ideal forms can exist as fragments, "collaged" into an empirical environment, and that other ideal forms can withstand elaborate deformations in the process of being adjusted to a context have largely eluded the modern architect. This articulation was recognized and deplored by Robert Venturi who called for elements which were "… hybrid rather than 'pure,' distorted rather than 'straightforward,' ambiguous rather than 'articulated' …"[425]

The conceptual dialogue between the Cornell studio and the works of Venturi could be traced later also in Stuart Cohen's essay entitled "Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it All", published in 1974. This time, Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas* was central to the argument, being published in 1972, two years before Cohen's article. In the essay, Cohen criticised Venturi's inclusivism, claiming that it "abandoned the analysis of formal organisation" and gave emphasis to "issues of symbolism".[426] This led Cohen to describe Venturi's approach as "cultural contextualism" and a "contextualism of images", with claims that "physical contextualism" should also be considered when aiming to achieve contextual architecture.[427] These student essays and *Collage City* show explicitly that the emphasis of Rowe and his Cornell studio teachings was on the physical and formal aspects of context, while the user dimension, material, programme, culture, memory, etc. were excluded from the notion.

The student projects presented in Hurtt's article, which were discussed later by Rowe in his *As I Was Saying Vol. III* and in publications on the studio, show how Rowe attained "the science of architecture", with ideal types as hypotheses tested in relation to context, which was understood as urban texture mapped through the black and white figure-ground drawings. Wayne Copper's project, completed in 1967, introduced figure-ground drawings to the studio that "had a tremendous impact on subsequent studio projects", according to Rowe, and his

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[423] David Blakeslee Middleton, "The Combination of the Traditional City and the Modern City: The Work of the Cornell Graduate Studio of Urban Design," *Lotus International* 27 (1980): 47.

[424] Tom Schumacher, "Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations," in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture; An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 298.

[425] Schumacher, "Contextualism," 301.

[426] Stuart Cohen, "Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it All," in *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture, 1973–1984,* ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 66.

[427] Cohen, "Physical Context/Cultural Context," 86.

figure-ground drawing of Wiesbaden would be later used as the cover of *Collage City*. [428] Almost 30 years after the project, in *As I Was Saying Vol. III*, Rowe criticised the use of figure-ground plans as design strategies, stating that, "now the figure/ground technique will lend itself to the description of cities mostly on flat sites and, mostly, with a ceiling of about five stories; and, apart from that, it doesn't work".[429]

In fact, the first projects coming out of the studio offered a more layered understanding of context. Tom Schumacher's urban design project for a new town in South Amboy, New Jersey completed in 1966, focused on "transparency, or overlapping grids", which shows how horizontal planes and their spatial stratification were used as a design strategy.[430] The project indicates further how Rowe's preceding Texas experience, with the key findings that were communicated in the Transparency essays, were later embedded in Rowe's Cornell studio teachings. Two diagrams, which were previously mentioned at Transparency Essay II, are specifically important in this context for their striking relevance to Copper and Schumacher's Cornell projects: one showing a figure-ground reading and the other showing the multiple interpretations of a Gestalt diagram. **(Figure 5.10)** Therefore, the transposition of the ideas in Texas to Cornell and their transformation and deformation are best depicted in these two student projects that were completed in successive years in the mid-1960s. **(Figure 5.11)** They show the very early shift in the Cornell studio from a multi-layered interpretation of figure and field, as derived from a richer understanding of context in Rowe's Texas years, to a formal reductionist use of figure-ground drawings.

As *Collage City* and the Cornell studio teachings show, Rowe's contextualism was not based on data collection, fact-finding or problem solving. Popper's approach is prominent here, since the hypothesis comes first to seek, analyse and synthesise the empirical data. In this regard, the underlying statement of Rowe's contextualism lies in its hypothesis, which puts forward Imperial or Baroque Rome as the model for contemporary urban and architectural design. In Rowe's case, the city was interpreted as a physical manifestation of Popper's open and liberal society through the design of public spaces as successive urban rooms, and buildings as urban *poché,* as depicted in Nolli's map of Rome. However, Rowe's approach is problematic, and not only at a meta-theoretical level, for transposing the idea of *the city* of Rome to any place on earth, but also at a design level, in that it applies a reductionist formal strategy of figure-ground diagrams. Derived from Gestalt principles, figure-ground maps show only the solid-void relations in a setting, and so depict only one dimension of an urban condition. In this regard, context was reduced – in application – to the figure-ground pattern of a setting.

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[428] Colin Rowe, "Cornell Studio Projects and Theses" in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol III: Urbanistics,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 17.

[429] Rowe, "Cornell Studio Projects," 24.

[430] Rowe, "Cornell Studio Projects," 14.

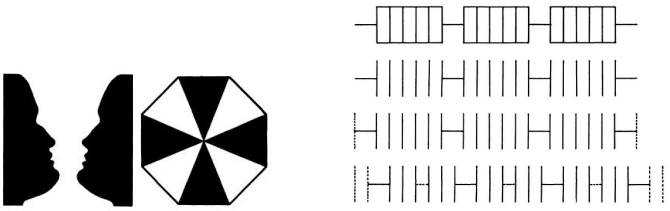

Figure 5.10. Figure-ground reading of a vase and/or twin profile and Maltese cross on the left and various readings of a Gestalt Diagram on the right. Source: Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II," 100–101.

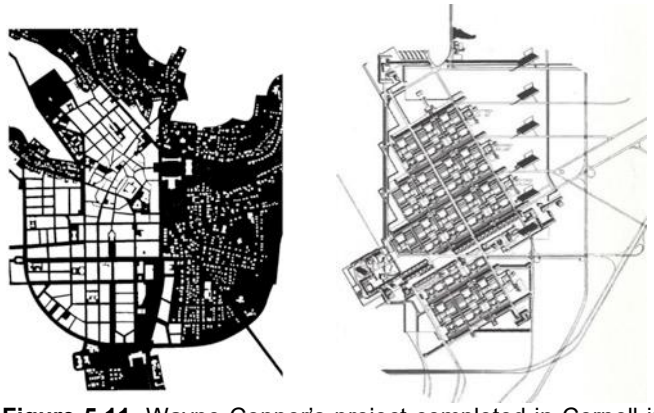

Figure 5.11. Wayne Copper's project completed in Cornell in 1967 on the left and Tom Schumacher's project completed in Cornell in 1966 on the right. Source: Rowe, *As I Was Saying: Urbanistics*, 15–18.

"Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal"

Rowe taught at the University of Texas at Austin between 1953 and 1956, together with, among others, Bernhard Hoesli, John Hejduk and Robert Slutzky, who would later become known as the Texas Rangers. In around 1955–56, Rowe and Slutzky wrote two essays entitled "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I and II". The first one, rejected by *The Architectural Review,* was published later by *Perspecta* in 1963, while the second was published after a long delay in 1971, again by *Perspecta*. As *Collage City* was a manifestation of Rowe's Cornell studio teachings, the "Transparency" essays could be seen also as manifestations of the Texas experience, or better to say, experiment. Although the teaching programme of the Texas Rangers lies beyond the scope of this research, the "Transparency" essays will be given emphasis here to unfold some embedded dimensions of context.[431]

The main proposal of the Transparency essays supported phenomenal rather than literal transparency. Literal transparency in architecture refers to glazed openings, and therefore, materiality, while phenomenal transparency is a perceptual quality that is suggested by different interpretations and readings. Rowe and Slutzky, by referring to György Kepes'

[431] Texas Rangers and their teaching program were comprehensively discussed in a book by Alexander Caragonne who was an undergraduate student in Texas at that period. For a detailed reading of Rowe's Texas years please see: Alexander Caragonne, *The Texas Rangers: Notes from the Architectural Underground* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993).

remarks on transparency in *Language of Vision*, defined phenomenal transparency as the "simultaneous perception of different spatial locations".[432] In "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I", the authors compared paintings by Picasso and Braque, Delaunay and Gris, and Moholy-Nagy and Léger to show the difference between literal transparency, characterised by a "translucent object in a deep, naturalistic space", and phenomenal transparency, characterised by "frontally aligned objects in a shallow, abstracted space".[433] In short, phenomenal transparency is an argument on shallow space, suppression of depth, layering and stratification.

Rowe and Slutzky tested the differentiations of literal and phenomenal transparency in architecture by comparing Gropius' Bauhaus building and Le Corbusier's Palace of the League of Nations. Here, the Bauhaus building was used as an example of literal transparency, with its glazed façade, while the Palace of the League of Nations was put forward as an example of phenomenal transparency with its layers of "spatial stratification."[434] **(Figure 5.12)** The analytical diagram of the Palace of the League of Nations shows how transparency becomes a spatial experience with the layering of vertical planes of the building and the landscape. In this respect, phenomenal transparency goes beyond the literary use of the glass façade, where the boundaries are blurred through dematerialisation. Phenomenal transparency is achieved rather from the definiteness of the vertical planes – whether glazed or not –which with its layering and stratification shapes the space and the context. This simultaneously constructed relationship between the space and context provides a continuously changing spatial experience.

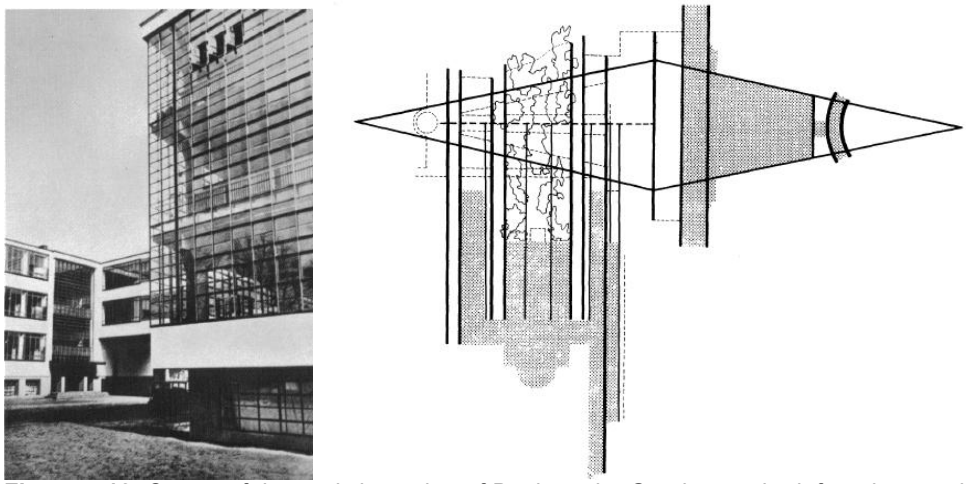

Figure 5.12. Corner of the workshop wing of Bauhaus by Gropius on the left and an analytical diagram of Le Corbusier's Palace of the League of Nations on the right. Source: Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I", 180–183.

[432] Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I" in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, ed. Colin Rowe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 161.

[433] Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I," 166.

[434] Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal I," 168.

In the second essay, Rowe and Slutzky made their comparison of literal and phenomenal transparency mainly through the façades of buildings. Among other buildings, various interpretations of Michelangelo's proposed façade for San Lorenzo were shown to reveal how a vertical plane could have a depth, suggesting successive alternative readings. **(Figure 5.13)** According to the authors, such an alternate reading is achieved from the rear plane, namely the wall, which serves "both as the catalyst and as the neutraliser of the successive figures which the observer experiences".[435] The perceptual altering of the figures and supportive rear plane relates the issue directly to Gestalt psychology. While in the first article, no mention was made of Gestalt, Gestalt principles, specifically the figure-ground diagrams and the notion of field, were introduced towards the end of the second article.

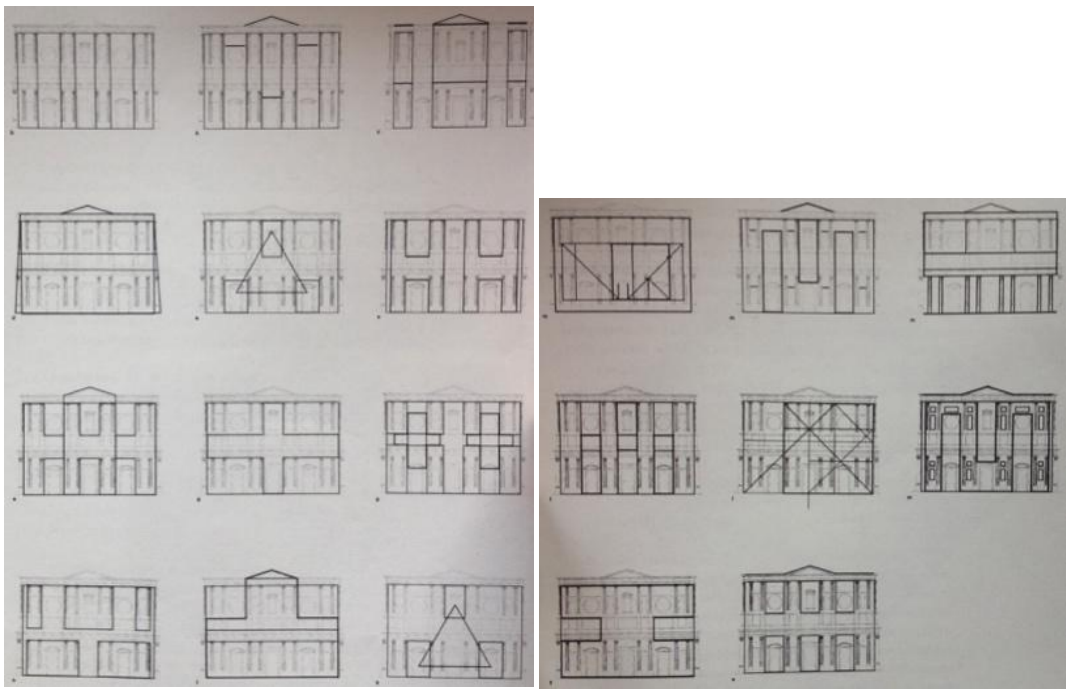

Figure 5.13. Various interpretations of the façade of San Lorenzo. Source: Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency II", 92–93.

Rowe and Slutzky used Gestalt principles to support their argument for phenomenal transparency, with the figure-ground phenomenon suggested as the "essential prerequisite of transparency" based on its capacity to provide a continuous reverse reading of the figure and ground.[436] As has been discussed in the previous part, the figure-ground diagram would later become a prominent instrument in architectural design in Rowe's theories and teachings. It is striking that in "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II", in addition to the black and white figure-ground diagrams, Rowe and Slutzky put forward a second diagram to discuss a more

[435] Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II" in in *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol I: Texas, Pre-Texas, Cambridge,* ed. Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 97.

[436] Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II," 102.

direct relevance of Gestalt principles to architecture. The diagram was of clearly visible rectangles and the letter "H", and possible different readings and interpretations were discussed. **(Figure 5.10)** Through the basic Gestalt principles of similarity, proximity, closure, direction, etc. a more layered and subtle reading of the figure was achieved with a critical perceptual projection. These possible different interpretations of a figure suggest immediately a layering, and thus depth, provided by the ground, or field, as referred to in Gestaltian terminology.

"Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II" concludes with a discussion on the notion of *field,* which was introduced as the "supporting matrix", a "prerequisite of all perceptual experience".[437] The concept of field here is equivalent to the rear plane discussed in the examples of paintings and façades, as the essential aspect of phenomenal transparency. In this respect, figure and its interpretations are possible only through the existence and consciousness of the supportive (back)ground. Rowe and Slutzky argued that "field is assumed to be more than the sum total of the elements which it embraces. Genetically it is prior to them. It is the condition of their quality and the reason of their behavior".[438] It is important to note that field is *a priori* as a *concept* to enable certain perceptual qualities discussed so far. Accordingly, field's prominence and priority in Gestalt does not come from its authority or age, and consequentially field and figure are not hierarchical. Figure is conditioned to field, not to be shaped by it, but to be constantly reconstructed with the new interpretations and readings supported by it.

The Texas experience – with an emphasis on the Gestaltian understanding of space and field – formed the base of Rowe's contextualism. In fact, *Collage City* was also first conceived in Texas during the 1954–56 period as part of a game played by Rowe, Hoesli, Hejduk and Slutzky. Hejduk, in a letter sent to Alexander Caragonne in 1991, noted:

> During the intense heat *Colin, Bernhard, Bob and I played a game*. I think Colin and Bernhard invented it. We would take a large blank sheet of drawing paper and begin to draw plans of buildings, historic and otherwise. Colin would say I am going to draw the plan of the Villa Madama then Bernhard would draw the plan of Wright's Gage House, etc. … *All night long, in the early hours of the morning the paper would be filled with plans from all times, many hybrids too*. At the end Colin would be devilishly amused and delighted. In retrospect who would have thought those plans of Classicism, Neo-Classicism, Modern Constructivism, Contemporary would have been the genetic coding of the architectural monsters which followed?[439] (emphasis mine)

Drawing the plans of architectural precedents, the game is the precursor of the *Collage City,* which is filled by the buildings belonging to different styles and times. **(Figure 5.14)** In fact, using architectural precedents in the design studio to introduce architectural history was one of Rowe's main contributions to design education in Texas and Cornell. Emphasis was mainly

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[437] Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II," 104.

[438] Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II," 104.

[439] Caragonne, *The Texas Rangers*, 324.

on the spatial organisational principles of the precedents rather than their style or form, being seen as the entities that both embodied and transferred architectural knowledge. While defining architectural knowledge and history through precedents establishes a strong disciplinary context, their migration through time and across geographies may be seen as an a-contextual design act. In this regard, “Collage City” represents a schizophrenic presence and an absence of a disciplinary and urban context.

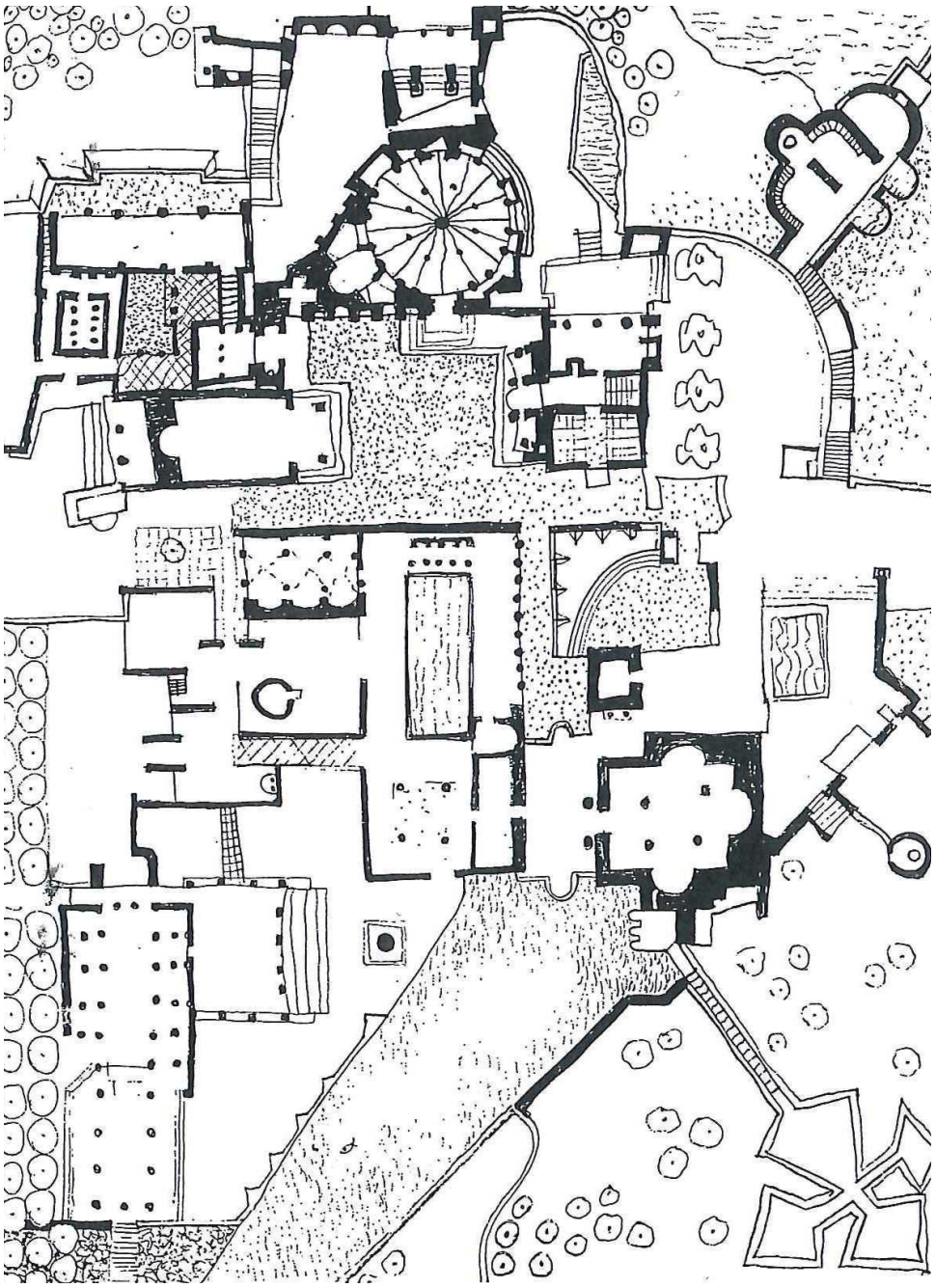

Figure 5.14. The “Plan Game” of Rowe, Hoesli, Hejduk, and Slutzky developed in Texas 1954–56. Source: Caragonne, *The Texas Rangers*, 324.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a more layered and dynamic understanding of context in the works of Colin Rowe could be traced in his Texas years. As shown explicitly in his Transparency essays, the relationship between figure and field was layered, and was open to different interpretations and readings, and was therefore dynamic. These were described as characteristics of phenomenal transparency, and were studied mainly through the vertical planes of paintings and buildings. In the early years of Rowe's Cornell studio these aspects were used as an urban architectural design strategy. The emphasis on façades in Rowe's early works shifted to the plan, since the vertical planes defined in the Transparency essays were interpreted as horizontal planes, as grids and plans in the Cornell studio. This transition was indeed purposeful, given the change in interest from architecture to urban, and buildings to public spaces. However, a sharper turn was triggered in the Cornell studio with the discovered use of figure-ground diagrams as a source of formal composition. Figure and ground plans became a static and fixed design strategy, crystallizing form through the depiction of the solid-void patterns of an urban setting. These plans were used as a source of reference for architectural composition, in which the collage technique was used to compose – or place together, to give the original meaning – historical forms and types. Moreover, the use of figure-ground plans reduced architecture to its footprint, while the collage technique of ideal types reduced the design act to an extrapolation of known solutions. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the evolution of Rowe's context approach reveals an obvious shift from *layers to objects*.

It could be argued that Rowe himself noticed this transition from layers to objects in his architectural activity. The "Commentary" published at the end of *Collage City* is striking in showing the desperate attempt to reopen the transparency argument in a certain way. To clarify the *Collage City* argument once again in these last few pages of the book, Rowe and Koetter referred to the paintings of Canaletto that show the composite character of the city, achieved through a collaging of buildings from different places and times.[440] Since Canaletto's drawings give more emphasis to objects, Rowe and Koetter introduced Poussin's paintings as a more precise example of *Collage City*. **(Figure 5.15)** This composite nature of form and time is also visible in Poussin's paintings, although he gives more emphasis to the relationship between figure and field through a more layered composition of buildings and landscapes. In fact, Rowe referred to Poussin in his 1947 essay "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," which was certainly the premise of his Transparency essays.[441] In this regard, it is

[440] Canaletto's drawings were paradigmatic in postmodern architectural discourse in suggesting composite time and form. One of the most precise references to them can be seen in Aldo Rossi's description of his "Analogous City" plate, see Chapter III.

[441] Rowe stated that: "It would have been, perhaps, in the landscapes of Poussin – with their portentous apparitions of the antique – that Palladio would have felt at home; and it is possibly the fundamentals of this landscape, the

not surprising that Poussin did not feature in the Transparency essays, but was recalled by Rowe in the introductory note written for "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II" in *As I was Saying I*.[442] In this regard, Poussin's landscapes can be seen as paradigms for phenomenal transparency due to the suggested layering, compressed depth and figure-field relationship.

Figure 5.15. Poussin's "Landscape with the ashes of Phocion collected by his widow" at the top, and Canaletto's Imaginary Venice at the bottom. Source: Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 179–180.

poignancy of contrast between the disengaged cube and its setting in the *paysage agreste*, between geometrical volume and the appearance of unimpaired nature, which lie behind Le Corbusier's Roman allusion." Rowe, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, ed. Colin Rowe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 3.

[442] Rowe stated that: "But forty years ago, when the Provençal dimensions of the Texas hill country could be added to the excitements of a new architectural curriculum, it was a highly volatile condition which ensued. It was a matter of Cézanne landscapes (with traces of Poussin) and an influence which then became hyper-stimulated by intimations of Synthetic Cubism and De Stijl." Rowe, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal II," 73.

"Commentary" concludes with the statement "utopia as metaphor and Collage City as prescription".[443] The prescription described figure-ground maps and the collage technique as the ultimate tools for the attainment of contextual architecture, and for this reason, *Collage City* refers to a fixed, static and complete understanding of context. It does not contain the aspects of context as suggested in the Transparency essays, as dynamic, layered, incomplete, and fluctuating readings and interpretations of the field. As a consequence, Poussin's resurrection at the end of *Collage City* remains only as a nostalgic gesture and as a reminder of the transparency argument, while Poussin's revival, on the other hand, shows us Rowe's ultimate motivation. According to Joan Ockman, "Rowe's subject is, as ever, the problem of form without utopia."[444] For George Baird, Rowe's larger project is "an architecture which professes an objective of continuous experiment" that is also "popular, intelligible and profound".[445] In fact, Poussin next to Canaletto in the 1970s and the transparency essays next to the plan game in the 1950s points to Rowe's ultimate concern being the argument between the fluctuating layers of context and the architectural precedent, and between the spatial and disciplinary context.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the spatial layers of context were erased in Rowe's approach, while the disciplinary context, with its *objets trouvés,* was strengthened. This lead to a formalist contextualism, that was – by excluding the programme dimension – deprived of any ideologically driven political statement.[446] Architecture, by recirculating its historical and traditional forms, conformed to the 1980s conservative culture. In this regard, context was reduced to the formal pattern of the built environment as its socio-political layer was abandoned. Although the formalist character of *Collage City* lacks the scope to deal with the diverse layers of urban conditions, its underlying criticisms of modernist and post-war urbanism and architecture – summarised by Rowe as "let's science built the town" and "let's people built the town" – are still relevant. Contemporary cities are still, on the whole, being shaped by object-like freestanding buildings, and many design mentors guide architecture

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[443] Rowe and Koetter*, Collage City*, 181.

[444] Joan Ockman, "Form without Utopia: Contextualizing Colin Rowe," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57 (1998): 452.

[445] George Baird, "Oppositions in the Thought of Colin Rowe," *Assemblage* 33 (1997): 24.

[446] In fact, this political tone was a source of friction between Rowe and Ungers in Cornell in the early 1970s. Kenneth Frampton described that period of the school as follows: "The solidarity of this school indirectly led and inspired by Rowe's courses in history and urban design started to disintegrate after the German architect O.M. Ungers was appointed chairman to the department in 1968; a position which he initially attained with Rowe's total support. Ungers imbued the school with a new energy, while at the same time challenging the apolitical but liberal consensus that had been the consequence of Rowe's pragmatic/humanism. Coming to Ithaca, New York, from West Berlin, Ungers was particularly sensitive to the political climate of the late sixties which by that time had involved the rising of the New Left, from Rudi Dutschke in Berlin to the students' revolt in Paris, *les évenements de Mai* of 1968. A comparable uprising began to sweep through American universities in the same year. Around 1971, the friction between Rowe and Ungers became extremely divisive, the school being split thereafter into two camps: A Rowe faction which oriented itself around a Humanist re-interpretation of Le Corbusier and Camillo Sitte, and an Ungers faction, whose range of concern seemed to oscillate between a reinterpretation of the history of Modern Movement in order to establish the formal and operational basis for a radical praxis and a much more positivistic orientation. In the conflict that ensued, Rowe's influence prevailed in a weakened form after 1974 when Ungers, while remaining on the faculty finally resigned his chairmanship and returned to Germany." Kenneth Frampton, "Notes on American Architectural Education: From the End of the Nineteenth Century until the 1970s," *Lotus International* 27 (1980): 29.

students to design icons. In this regard, *Collage City* is still relevant today, especially in architectural and urban design education, not as a prescription, but as a metaphor!

6. CONCLUSION

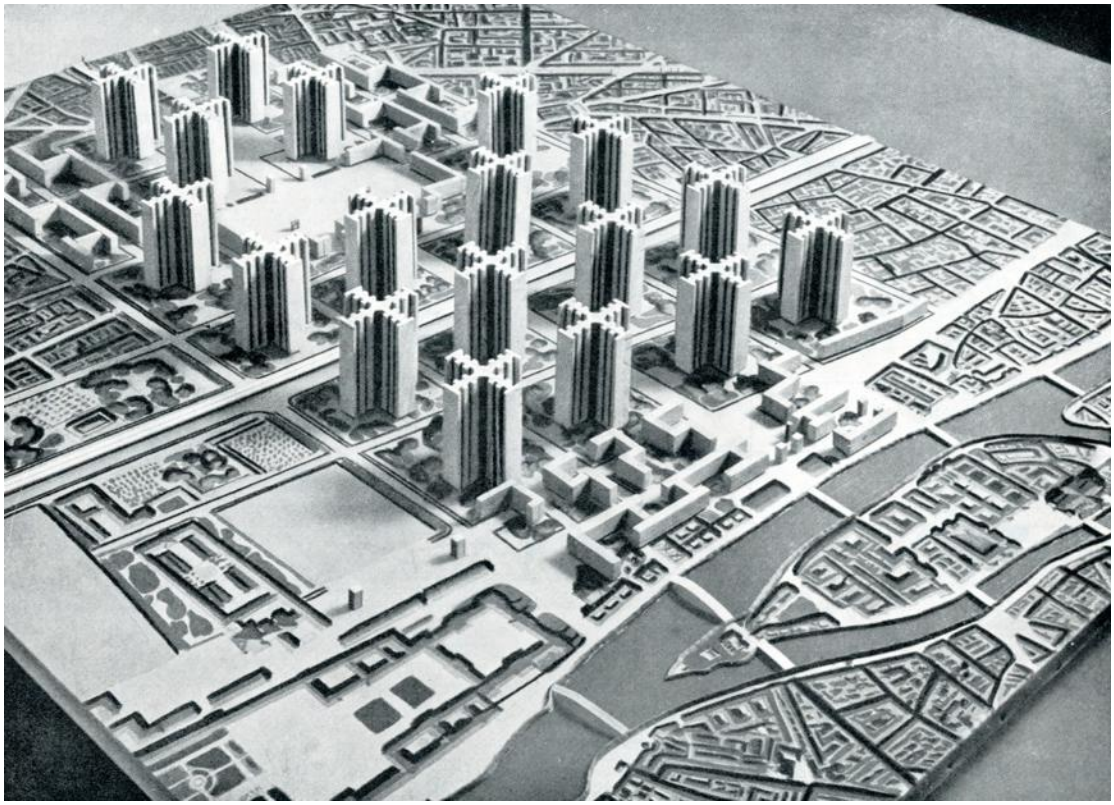

Figure 6.1. Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, Paris, France, 1925. Source: Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP, http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=6159&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=2&itemCount=2&sysParentName=Home&sysParentId=65

> So I shall ask my readers to imagine they are walking in this new city, and have begun to acclimatize themselves to its untraditional advantages. You are under the shade of trees, vast lawns spread all round you. The air is clear and pure; there is hardly any noise. What, you cannot see where the buildings are ? Look through the charmingly diapered arabesques of branches out into the sky towards those widely-spaced crystal towers which soar higher than any pinnacle on earth. These translucent prisms that seem to float in the air without anchorage to the ground - flashing in summer sunshine, softly gleaming under grey winter skies, magically glittering at nightfall - are huge blocks of offices. Beneath each is an underground station (which gives the measure of the interval between them). Since this City has three or four times the density of our existing cities, the distances to be transversed in it (as also the resultant fatigue) are three or four times less. For only 5-10 per cent of the surface area of its business centre is built over. That is why you find yourselves walking among spacious parks remote from the busy hum of the autostrada.[447]
>
> Le Corbusier

[447] Le Corbusier, "Plan Voisin, Paris, France, 1925". Fondation Le Corbusier. Last accessed, 06 December, 2016. http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=6159&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=2&itemCount=2&sysParentName=Home&sysParentId=65

Le Corbusier proposed Plan Voisin in 1925 to destroy and replace Paris's Marais neighbourhood, which was suffering from diseases, poor sanitation and crowd at the time. "Based on concrete statistics" as Le Corbusier puts it, the plan included 18 cruciform glass office towers plus low-rise governmental, cultural and residential buildings raised on a vast park-like green space.[448] Altering the traditional idea of the street, the ground was designed in multiple layers accommodating the public transportation, motorways and wide promenades with shops, restaurants, cafes, etc. Dissatisfied with the architectural and living qualities in this neighbourhood, which is apparently among one of the most vivid areas of Paris today, Le Corbusier not only offered a new architectural order by taking the city as a *tabula rasa* but also imagined to enrich a new economic and social organization. Therefore, the plan can be seen as a prescription for how to realize a modernist utopia. It proposed not only to disregard the existing physical, social and cultural context of its setting but also to break with the tradition of the discipline.[449] Although Plan Voisin was never realized, its premises – yet mainly without the qualities foreseen by Le Corbusier – have since been present in the planning of the post-war urban periphery of many European cities, fast urbanized towns of the developing countries such as Turkey and recent ghost towns of China.

Modernism indeed cannot be considered as an expression of a singular architectural, urban or stylistic dogma. Many diverse approaches were embedded in it as has already been argued by many scholars.[450] However, orthodox modern architecture was questioned deeply after the two world wars of the 20th century, which cast a cloud over modernization's progressive and emancipatory dimensions. Critiques were further aired by the failures of the urban renewal projects in USA and immense reconstruction of the post-war European cities, the destructive effects of which were not less than the war itself. Against this background, many sociologists, urbanists, journalists and activists developed reactions in the 1950s and 1960s towards the ill-effects of both the orthodox modern architecture and post-war reconstruction and revitalization projects. One of the most prominent examples is Jane Jacobs who became a seminal figure in USA to protest by then the current urban planning policies against which she argued the significance of mixed-primary uses, vitality of street life, diversity and density for renewing the neighbourhoods as she widely discussed in her influential book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*[451] During this period, various concepts were introduced by philosophers, geographers, architects, etc. to generate a more

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[448] Le Corbusier, "Plan Voisin."

[449] By the "tradition of the discipline", I refer to Richard Sennett's definition of knowledge as additive and accumulative and the development of practice as something collective and continued. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

[450] For instance, Sarah Williams Goldhagen argued that modernism cannot be reduced to style but should rather be understood as a discourse that contains variety of different positions and formal practices. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, "Something to Talk about: Modernism, Discourse, Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64/2 (2005): 144-167.

[451] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

situated and engaged understanding of human beings and buildings in their physical, social, cultural and natural contexts.

Martin Heidegger's 1954 article "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," which obviously based on his preceding thoughts on Being and *dasein,* became very influential in architecture in the forthcoming decades for arguing the situatedness of buildings on ground – the Earth.[452] Heidegger argued that buildings are not located at a pre-given space but they allow a site to become a location, which they turned into a place. Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz has become the major figure to develop an architectural approach based on Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy especially with his book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*.[453] He reintroduced the old Roman concept *genius loci* and defines the existential meaning of architecture as uncovering and visualizing the spirit of place, which is indeed a very abstract approach and has not been turned into a thorough design theory. In the early 1980s, Kenneth Frampton developed another mainstream argument known as Critical Regionalism.[454] While phenomenological architecture emphasised situatedness of buildings in their natural and historical contexts, Critical Regionalism addressed the conflicting encounter between the local traditional cultures and universal civilization, which was introduced as a central topic in Paul Ricoeur's 1965 book *History and Truth*.[455] Rather than developing metaphysical definitions of place like Norberg-Schulz, Frampton's aim was to introduce some critical strategies to engage the particularities of local architectures with modern production techniques. Norberg-Schulz and Frampton were both attacking orthodox modernism as well as the historicist and eclectic formalism of postmodern architecture by introducing different perspectives on the alternative definitions related to context in the 1970s and 1980s. However, context was already introduced as a significant and stimulating notion in the architectural debate of the 1950s and 1960s by architects and theorists who were later regarded as the main figures of the postmodern camp.

Beginning from the early 1950s, various architects and teachers introduced context and related concepts as operative notions that trigger new design approaches to heal the ill-effects of orthodox modern architecture and the destructive effects of post-war reconstructions. Among them, Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Colin Rowe stand as distinguished figures for igniting diverse perspectives on what the context-thinking might entail in architectural theory, practice and education. In the early works of these protagonists, context was introduced as a critical notion to address problems in the built

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[452] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 2005), 95-119.

[453] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1980).

[454] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 16-30.

[455] Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *History and Truth*, ed. Paul Ricoeur (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 271-284.

environments and the response of the discipline to them while reflecting upon the act of design without referring to any particular stylistic or formalist preferences. While their approaches often differed, and were sometimes even contradictory, they also complemented and enriched each other, adding to the construction of an informal dialogue that is here referred to as a debate. However, the later approaches of these architects and scholars contributed to the development of postmodern architecture with emphasis on traditional and historical formal vocabulary and the use of past forms, and so they themselves can be said to have sacrificed their own critical project on context. Therefore, a reverse chronological study and interpretation of their works with a criticism from within was offered to reclaim the notion as a critical concept today by uncovering its erased and forgotten layers. In analysing the different meanings attributed to context in the works of these protagonists, this study presented three parallel narratives where the cross-readings among them would enable to construct this implicit yet rich and vivid debate.

Analysing the student years and the early works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Colin Rowe, one can identify a uniquely explicit understanding of context. Attacking his master Ernesto Rogers' definition of *ambiente* as the visual-formal characteristics of the pre-existing environments, Rossi developed the notion of *locus* as the art of place. Against the *a priori* understanding of context in architectural design, Rossi argued that *locus* is invented through architecture to cultivate the singularity of place, and is based on the specific relationship of men with their surroundings. On the other hand, Venturi's early understanding of context was based on the perception of urban form, as influenced by the Gestalt theory of vision. Starting in his master's thesis at Princeton University, Venturi looked deep into spatial context with particular emphasis on the position and form of buildings in the urban setting, and sought to achieve the difficult or greater whole in the built environment. Although context was not apparent in Rowe's architectural theory and teachings in the 1950s, his understanding of phenomenological transparency and the Gestaltian notion of field offered a layered, dynamic and incomplete understanding of context in the sense that it enhanced continuous fluctuating readings and interpretations of buildings and their relationships with the urban surroundings. While Venturi's definition of context was related more to the visible physical aspects of an urban composition, Rossi aimed to uncover the collective memory of a place through the notion of *locus,* and Rowe emphasised the visual experience of the spatial stratification offered by a field. Although at some points they were either very prescriptive or abstract, these different approaches open up new horizons on how the context-thinking can reframe architectural theory, pedagogy and practice with a more engaged yet critical understanding of the discipline.

After the 1970s, the notion of context became rather implicit in the works of its protagonists, who began to emphasise the cultural realm of their own personal artistic production, the tastes of the public or the disciplinary framework in their works. After the 1968 student

protests questioning the discipline, his subsequent suspension from teaching in Italy, and his enhanced focus on practice after the mid-1970s, Rossi began to develop analogous architecture that was shaped by a de-territorialising and re-territorialising of the forms derived from a vast spectrum of both the discipline as a whole and his own personal memory. In this regard, Rossi articulated an understanding of context in which the fictitious ideal city was invented, bringing together different architectural projects autonomously. In their newly established practice in the mid-1960s, Venturi and Scott Brown justified their emerging pop approach by announcing it ironically to be an expression of the values of society. From then on, their projects emphasised iconography, representing classical vocabularies through signs and using pop art techniques to communicate with the taste cultures of contemporary society. Influenced by philosopher Karl Popper's advocacy of open societies against historicist and utopian social engineering, and supported by the discovery of figure-ground diagrams in the Cornell Urban Design Studio in the mid-1960s, Rowe aimed to develop the "science of architecture" in which forms, derived from the traditional vocabulary of the discipline, were collaged in line with the solid-void pattern of the immediate urban surroundings. In this regard, the neoclassical syntax for the urbanistic collage of the architectural objects was prioritised that had resulted in a formal eclecticism and heterostyle in the 1970s. In their later works, Rossi elaborated memory; Venturi and Scott Brown, iconography; and Rowe, the tradition of the discipline, aiming to liberate themselves from the mundane aspects of the context.

Accordingly, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Colin Rowe reveal a shift in context from place to memory, from spatial to iconographic and from layers to collaged objects, respectively. Abandoning the collective, spatial and layered understanding of context in their later works, they looked instead to resurrect forms from personal memory, to communicate with the taste cultures of the community through iconography and to design buildings as objects by bringing together past architectural solutions, all of which became associated with postmodern architecture. Postmodernism buried the former critical interpretations of context beneath historicism and eclecticism by filtering out many diverse approaches and definitions. For instance, the discursive framework of the First Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980, which was a turning point in the institutionalisation and internationalisation of postmodern architecture, and in particular its outrageous *Strada Novissima* exhibition, exalted historicism and eclecticism in architecture. Most of the participants of the exhibition chose to re-circulate past forms, either directly or ironically, and offered a very restrictive understanding of context as a historical formal cataloguing of the discipline of architecture. This was seen by critic Charles Jencks as a "counter-reformation", suggesting that the architects had been given the freedom to adopt a historical and eclectic formal vocabulary once again or, in other words, to erase Le Corbusier's big red X crossing the orders of classical architecture in his drawing *"Ceci n'est pas l'architecture"* (This is not architecture). That said, what was seen as a victory by Jencks was harshly criticised by philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who claimed that the tradition of

modernity had been sacrificed. It can indeed be said that the First Venice Architecture Biennale not only sacrificed the tradition of modernity, but also the context debate by bringing about a reduction of the preceding rich, layered and dense understanding of the notion.

In addition to the so-called postmodern architects narrowed use of the notion context, traditionalists and conservationists co-opted the term in the 1980s by defining contextualism rather as a simplistic design approach that seeks for homogeneity and conformity in the built environments by dictating the design of buildings in reference to the style, height, size, material, etc. of the surrounding buildings, or to fit into the cityscape. It is a sad fact that this rather blinkered understanding of context is still influencing in no small way our comprehension of the term today. Indeed, as this research showed through the critical archaeology of the works of Rossi, Venturi and Scott Brown and Rowe, including the notion of context within the realm of the discipline of architecture had a much greater role than the extrapolation of what has already found in an existing site. Context was introduced as a critical frame of reference to take up a position in the making of cities and contemporary urbanity. Rossi was critical of urban expansion and rapid urbanisation – especially in the northern industrial cities of Italy, such as Milan, Turin and Genoa – as well as the new urban scale and the failure of the post-war reconstruction of Italian cities. Against this background, he defined the city as the object and context of architecture, and put forward typo-morphological analysis as a research method. Venturi's concern was not about the freestanding detached building, but rather the city, which is constructed collectively through architecture. Accordingly, his emphasis was not on the design of buildings through the self-referentiality of forms, but understanding them as constituent components of a greater whole. Also in his following studies on Las Vegas with Scott Brown, their aim was to investigate architecture and life in contemporary American urbanism. Rowe's later interest in urban design and the city was not merely a formalist gesture, as it used to be understood, but an attempt to identify a method for the design of cities for open and liberal societies. Flying in the face of the *tabula rasa* approach of Modern Architecture, which considers the city to be a blank sheet, he praised rather the characteristics of traditional urbanism.

In this regard, in their different understandings of context, the city plays a mediating role between site and the particular cultural realm, which was emphasised after the 1970s through memory, iconography and the discipline's traditional vocabulary. In this regard, the context thinking had a critical function, encouraging architects to take up a position concerning the city and contemporary urbanity. Context also had a didactical importance for the development of a theory in architectural design in order to provide a rigorous conceptualisation of the design act. For instance, in Rossi's pedagogical and theoretical approach, typo-morphological research was essential for situating architectural interventions within the larger collective framework of the city, and involved a thorough analysis of the urban form and the long-term effects of economic, political, social, etc. conditions on the spatial transformation of cities.

According to Rossi, this analysis indeed goes beyond the responsibility of a single actor, being rather the collective responsibility of all architects. Context was the theme of Venturi's first lesson after the introduction to his Theories of Architecture course, in which it was introduced as one of the most significant aspects of architectural design. His later "learning from" studios with Scott Brown on Las Vegas and Levittown emphasised further the importance of carrying out research in particular contexts. Context was also the main concern of Colin Rowe's Cornell Urban Design Studio, in which the study of the urban fabric of different parts of the city had primary importance in the design process, since the studio briefs offered hardly any programmatic descriptions. Although it was reductive with its fix and static use, he proposed figure-ground maps as a method of analysis, and the traditional vocabulary of the discipline as a method of design.

In contemporary architectural culture and practice, the notion context is used and understood very often in a very limited fashion. On the one hand, triggered by the neoliberal globalization, architecture has increasingly become an object of commodity as has argued by many scholars so far.[456] This has led – more than ever – to the celebration of iconic buildings,[457] which mostly ignore the physical, social, cultural layers of their contexts. Designing buildings detached from the contextual concerns as free-standing objects has been misinterpreted by many architects as an autonomous design act, which, on the contrary, might have surrendered to market forces in reality. On the other hand, we are witnessing an exaggerated expression of local traditional architectural styles and authentic values in the built environments[458] that has been presented as a contextual design act with the impact of neo-conservative politics.[459] The resurrection of old forms and styles do indeed abuse context by ignoring the spatial and social specificities of contemporary city and urban life. In addition, there has been great interest in the creation of thematic environments that are developed through the transposition of particular contexts from distant places or times to anywhere on earth. While such unique environments are being replicated continuously, a widespread and continuous destruction of the identity of many urban contexts is taking place under the label of "regeneration".

Above mentioned emerging issues in urban environments call for a renewed architectural understanding that resists both the homogeneous space of globalism and the valorisation of national identities through populist architectural expression, free-standing objects and historical revivalism, and the alienation and creation of fake identity. However, when the contemporary governing paradigm of the architectural discourse is reviewed, one can see

[456] See: William S. Saunders, ed., *Commodification and Spectacle in Architecture: A Harvard Design Magazine Reader* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

[457] See: Leslie Sklair, "*Iconic Architecture and Capitalist Globalization*," *City* 10 (2006): 21-47.

[458] Sociologist John Urry argues that globalization cannot be defined as an opposition to localization. On the contrary, it often increases local distinctiveness. John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

[459] See Foreword.

that architects often fall back upon pragmatism, which nowadays denotes not philosophical tradition, but rather the inclusion of practical considerations within the design process. This understanding has been communicated in literature by the new architectural pragmatists while in architectural practice finds its most prevalent expression in the contemporary Dutch pragmatic modernism. The new architectural pragmatism is calling for a projective and engaged practice by defining context as the forces that act upon the architectural form – in other words, architectural design that is shaped by the constraints of the programme, site, user, etc. where a critical, theoretical or discursive positioning of the design act in the collective making of the cities is scorned. In this regard, they may be accused of exploiting context (or even abandoning it altogether, as exemplified in Rem Koolhaas' "fuck context") to justify the form so as to match the intentions of the contractor and/or architect. In framing architecture as a practice with emphasis on pragmatism, it has lost its capacity to operate as a discourse, while also losing the ability to generate critical and theoretical reflections on the current state of both the architectural discipline and the built environment.

Schools of architecture are also not very influential today in engendering new governing debates and theoretical approaches that cultivates new frames of references on context. In most of the architectural design studios, context is used without much reflection and mostly introduced as a concept that simply deals with the singular site analysis of use, topography, climate, etc. Multi-layered realities of the cities and their long term spatial transformations are rarely being considered as a question of context in architectural design process. There are various architects and scholars who have initiated research programs on cities such as the Project on the City conducted by Rem Koolhaas at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.[460] However, either by establishing causal links between design and research or leaving them as separate realms, these recent studies have hardly lead to elaborations of architectural design theories, which consider context as their intrinsic aspect. In addition, as Beatriz Colomina stated after mapping and reviewing the pedagogical experiments taking place during the post-war period, "in many ways today the pedagogical programs in the schools of architecture call themselves radical but in fact they are recycling the same methods and techniques that were actually put in place by this [post-war] generation."[461] Therefore, new pedagogical approaches are required today including the ones that deal critically with context in the field of architecture.

Today, the notion of context arises in many architectural thoughts and discussions, while it also has greatly lost its potential capacity to engender a critical debate within the field. This research would help reclaiming context as a critical concept in contemporary architectural theory, pedagogy and practice. Although the analysed specific time-context of the post-war

[460] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., ed., *Great Leap Forward: Harvard Design School Project on the City* (New York: Taschen, 2002).

[461] Beatriz Colomina, "Venice Biennale 2014: Radical Pedagogies," interview broadcasted at Archdaily website. Last accessed, 09 December, 2016. http://www.archdaily.com/518281/venice-biennale-2014-radical-pedagogies-exhibit-design-by-amunategui-valdes-architects

period is different than today, there are still some shared problems that are need to be addressed such as the *tabula rasa* approach intensified by the fast urbanization, architects' continuous will to design buildings as free-standing detached objects, ill-effects of urban regeneration and renewal projects and the limited understanding of context as singular site analysis of the use, program, topography, climate, etc. Contemporary developments in the built environments and the current state of the architectural discipline also trigger new issues like: the limited understanding of context as the resurrection of old forms and styles to evoke associations with the "glorious" past and the authentic values; the abandonment of critical and theoretical approaches that deal with the positioning of architecture towards the interrelated conditions in which the buildings come into existence, the collective making of the cities and the wider matrix of the discipline; the lack of new pedagogical experiments that develop design theories responding the emerging urban conditions such as the spatial transformation of cities due to mass migration and introduce renewed insights on the possible new definitions of context.

The findings of this study on the specific context thinking in the works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Colin Rowe are still relevant for architecture today and could bring some novel insights for the future of the discipline due to various reasons. First, these protagonists offered together a multi layered understanding of context by approaching it from different perspectives as the singularity of place, the spatial experience, the everyday life-world and layers of the built environment. Hence, they show how the coexistence of the different interpretations of context could implicitly generate a debate that reframe architectural thinking and practice. Second, the works of these protagonists propose context as a didactical means for teaching architectural design; as a way to enhance architectural practice by considering the specificity of each place and the greater whole; as a lens to develop design theory through the rigorous conceptualisation of the design act as a relational operation; and as a catalyser of design research, which incorporates multiple realities of the built environments in the architectural design process rather than dwelling on the self-referentiality of form generation. Therefore, context could trigger weaving together pedagogy, practice, theory and research with an understanding of architecture as an expanded field, which does not exclude the knowledge developed in other fields yet takes its core materials from within the discipline such as the form of the city and the buildings that constitute it. Third, these protagonists take the city as a means of analysis and as a means of design rather than focusing on the design of buildings as free-standing objects or considering context practically as the immediate forces acting upon it. In this regard, taking the city as the object of study and context of architecture could cultivate an understanding of the built environments as a collective work that demands the cooperative responsibility of architects, theoreticians and teachers since context cannot be reduced solely to singular site analysis.

This thesis has put forward a starting point for the reclamation of context by revealing some of

its previously forgotten definitions. By contextualising context, the historiography presented in this study shows that architectural practice could be both critical and engaged, as the multi-layered debate of the 1950s and 1960s confirms. Hence, this argument presents context as a corrective to both the polemicists of critical architecture who are codifying architecture as a self-contained discipline with its own intrinsic formal principles and the evasive position adopted by the new pragmatists. Rather than endorsing strict definitions, toolboxes or design principles for contextual design practices, this research has revealed that context has a critical capacity when considered as an intrinsic aspect of the architectural design process. Hence, context could re-enhance new frameworks for architectural practice and thinking today by entailing a relational and situated understanding of the design project. From this perspective, context is not something that has to be slavishly followed, nor is it something that dictates the form that follows “external” forces. Furthermore, it is not something that presumes conformity and homogeneity in the built environment, nor does it promote any revivalist, thematic of picturesque place-making strategy. Accordingly, considering context does not mean responding to the style, height, materials, etc. of the neighbouring buildings, or fitting into the cityscape. In this regard, analysing, interpreting, enhancing and inventing context through the tools and the materials of the discipline became crucial in the teaching, practicing and conceptualising of architecture.

The notion of context can be reintroduced today as a vital concept that begins in the architectural design studio, where an understanding of the design project can be garnered as a relational operation in which the new is situated through a rigorous conceptualisation of what the existing might mean, and what it could become. This demands developing design theories as hypothesis that needs to be tested first within the educational environment. Rather than designing buildings with populist expressions that acquiesce to hegemonic culture, design theories in which the context is taken as an intrinsic condition could enable critical reflections on the act of design. Taking context as an intrinsic aspect of the design process means engaging with the interrelated social, physical, economic, cultural conditions within a city in which an architectural work comes into existence. The foremost significance of context lies here: in its immanent quality to project a theory of the city by fostering strong positions to be taken towards the spatial aspects of the city and the quality of the urban life it triggers rather than focusing on the individual structure. In this regard, context could offer new frames of references that compels architects to take up a position within a wider matrix of the discipline and the collective making of the cities. Thus architecture could be reconsidered as a prosthesis to the city, which is built and transformed collectively, and a prosthetic discourse, which contains different positions embodying knowledge in other fields such as art, visual studies, philosophy.

In order to generate the context debate in contemporary architectural discourse, and its rich, layered and productive qualities in lieu of its current “hollow” version, further research is

needed that can highlight other erased, forgotten or yet to be discovered definitions of context. Future studies could contribute to the debate by documenting other alternative histories of the notion of context, addressing territories, actors and discussions that are outside the dominant Western discourse. In addition, new pedagogical experiments can be considered necessary in schools of architecture for the development of different insights into context, and to publicise its various uses as a didactical means. It is worth reemphasising the role of theory and the rigorous conceptualisations it brings to the design act, where context is taken as an intrinsic aspect of the architectural design process. In short, it is vital that studies be launched aimed at reclaiming context as a critical notion by operating architecture as a prosthetic discourse; by weaving together practice, pedagogy, research and theory; by projecting stimulating reflections on the built environment; and by bringing about cities as the target of the discipline. To ask once again, isn't it time that practitioners, researchers, teachers and theoreticians of architecture operate collectively and take more responsibility for the built environment?

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