

6. URBAN THEORY AFTER MODERNISM

CONTEXTUALISM, MAIN STREET, AND BEYOND

INTRODUCTION

Collage City

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter

In the postmodern period, one of the most influential American urban theories is Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's *Collage City*, written in 1973 and published in 1978. This excerpt appeared in the British monthly, *Architectural Review*, in 1975, and contains these sections: "After the Millenium," "Crisis of the Object: Predicament of Texture," "Collision City and the Politics of 'Bricolage,'" and "Collage City and the Reconquest of Time." The problems of modern urbanism addressed by the architects' proposal were later summarized by Rowe in mock psychoanalytic terms as "object fixation, *zeitgeist* worship, physics envy [pseudo science], and stradaphobia."¹

The authors' "diagnosis" stems from the research of Cornell students and faculty in Rome, a city widely admired as the model of traditional urbanism. The group's adoption of the tool of the figure/ground plan for urban analysis led to a revival of interest in the 1748 Nolli Plan of Rome. These drawings emphasize the role of public and private space in determining the character of the city. The Cornell group's main discovery was that modern architecture had inverted the ratio of built to "open" space with disastrous results at the street level. By privileging the object building, modernism left desolate fields of nonurban space that divided neighborhoods, isolated people, and stranded buildings. These wastelands, although convenient for the automobile, lacked an inscription of human scale, and the quality of enclosure so characteristic of the premodern European public realm. (ch. 9)

Rowe and Koetter's critique continues with a review of utopian urban schemes circa 1965, ranging from "nostalgic" to "prophetic." These diverse manifestations are important when considered relative to one another, but separately, are dismissed as extreme. In their place, Rowe and Koetter offer the idea of *collage*, as a technique, and as a "state of mind" tinged with irony. The authors promote this fragmentary method as a solution to the problem of the "new," without sacrificing the possibility of a democratic pluralism:

"the city of collage...might be a means of accommodating emancipation and allowing all parts of a pluralist situation their own legitimate expression."²

The political aspect of their theory depends on the pro-democratic writings of the twentieth-century Austrian philosopher Karl Popper for its defense of the necessity to avoid coercive, totalizing schemes. This anti-totalitarian reasoning connects the authors with postmodern thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard.

Rowe and Koetter's notion that building inevitably involves value judgements and represents "the ethical content of the good society" is reiterated by Philip Bess and Karsten Harries. (ch. 8) While both "Collage City" and Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (ch. 1) make inclusive arguments (for order/disorder, "accommodation and coexistence," both/and, etc.), Rowe and Koetter's pluralist approach needs to be distinguished from Venturi's. The form and intention of the oppositions (summarized as "accommodation and coexistence") is indeed similar. Rowe, Koetter, and Venturi are all influenced by the positive view of ambivalence in Gestalt theory, which permits a multiplicity of readings.

But the differences emerge more clearly in Venturi's later book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, written with Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour. (See excerpt, this chapter) The "populist" position they articulate deliberately avoids the political implications of their research by refusing to make value judgements about the Las Vegas strip. Because of their willingness to engage ethical issues, Rowe and Koetter are more genuinely enthusiastic about a pluralistic society and an urbanism allowing for change.

1 Colin Rowe, "The Present Urban Predicament," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* 1 (1981): 17.

2 Ibid.: 17, 18.

COLIN ROWE AND FRED KOETTER

COLLAGE CITY

AFTER THE MILLENIUM

The city of modern architecture which, now that it seems to have become an almost irresistible reality, has begun to invite so much criticism, has, of course, prompted two quite distinct styles of reaction which are neither of recent formulation. Perhaps in its origins this city was a gesture to social and psychological dislocations brought about by the First World War and the Russian Revolution: and one style of reaction has been to assert the inadequacy of the initial gesture. Modern architecture did not go far enough. Perhaps dislocation is a value in itself: perhaps we should have more of it: perhaps, hopefully embracing technology. We should now prepare ourselves for some kind of computerised surf ride, over and through the tides of Hegelian time, to some possibly ultimate haven of emancipation.

Such might seem to be the approximate inference of the Archigram image: but we wish to parallel it with an image of which the inference is completely the reverse. As an exhibition of townscape, the Harlow town square involves a conscious attempt to placate and console. The first image is ostensibly forward looking, the second deliberately nostalgic: and, if both are highly random, the randomness of the one is intended to imply all the vitality of an unprejudiced imaginary future, while the randomness of the other is intended to suggest all the casual differentiations which might have been brought about by the accidents of time. The implication of the second image is of an English market place (imaginably it could also be Scandinavian) which, though it is absolutely of the moment (the moment being c.1950) is also a product of all the accumulations and vicissitudes of history.

Excerpt from "Collage City" *Architectural Review* 158, no. 942 (August 1975): 66–90. Courtesy of the authors and the publisher.



Superstudio.

Which is not to comment upon the respective quality of these images, nor to propose the question: *which of them is the more necessary*: but which may be allowed to preface a somewhat analogous confrontation. Its two parts are, in the one case, Italian and, in the other, American: Brave New World (the obtrusive themes of emancipation and love played out in a desert—with impressive mountain backdrop) and Brave Old World (a confection which insists that things are now, but absolutely, far more like they used to be than they ever were before). The one is a product of Superstudio, exhibited fairly recently at the Museum of Modern Art, and the other is a model for Disneyworld's Main Street.

And the argument can be quite simple. Superstudio professes to conceive of objects, of buildings, of all artificial physical form, as coercive and tyrannical, as operating to limit a, probably, Marcusean freedom of choice. Objects, buildings, physical forms are, and must be considered, dispensable: and the ideal of life must be seen as unrestricted and nomadic—all that we need are a set of Cartesian co-ordinates (representative of a universal electronic structure) and then, plugged into this grid of freedom (or skipping around within it), an equilibrated and happy existence will, *ipso facto*, ensue.

Now, if this is may be to traduce the poetry of the Superstudio image, it is not seriously to distort its idea. Freedom is freedom from objects—freedom from all the clutter of Venice, Florence, Rome, freedom to range in an endless Arizona of the mind, to range hopefully supported by the occasional cactus—and the idea of such ultimate simplicity

can only be seductive. All of Le Corbusier's funny buildings have gone away, all of the technological extravaganzas of Archigram have been declared obsolete; and, instead, here we are just as we are, naked, natural, without excuse and with nobody going to be hurt—except, of course, that, around the corner we may be pretty certain about the superior restaurant and the Lamborghini which is waiting to take us there.

Given the suppositions from which it derives, one may concede the logic of the Italian image: but, as the ultimate upstaging of science fiction, it may still permit the consideration of Disneyworld as a *reductio ad absurdum*, of townscape. For here is not any Arizona of the mind, tragic in spite of all, but rather a Main Street of musical comedy.

Deprivation can, apparently, take a variety of forms; and, whatever abstract freedom might be (*Don't fence me in* or *Please do fence me in just a little bit*), freedom in Florence is, conceivably, not quite the same thing as freedom in Dubuque. But this is simply to intuit that, just as there is a sense of surfeit in Italy, there is a sense of deprivation in Iowa. For, where the absolute Cartesian grid of cities, of rural roads, or fields, has long been a preponderant reality and, where it has been equipped with the minimum of interpolations, then both grid and interpolations assume a different consequence from what might elsewhere obtain. The grid ceases to be a desirable ideal, the interpolations cease to be a disagreeable reality; the grid becomes a slightly fatiguing fact of life, the interpolations a long awaited distraction; and, if this argument is in any way permissible, then, just possibly, we might arrive at two conclusions:

- 1) That the success of Walt Disney Enterprises rests in its provision of significant and particular interpolations in the all-embracing and egalitarian grid; and
- 2) That the Utopian world which is proposed by such an outfit as Superstudio can only operate as some sort of green light for the Disney-like entrepreneurs of the future.

In other words, the ultimate grid of freedom—which is like the ultimate grid of Nebraska or Kansas—whether propounded as an idea or as a convenience, will produce a more or less predictable reaction and the deliberate elimination of local detail—whether spatial or psychological—is likely to be counter-balanced by its simulation. Which is to intimate that images like these two are sequentially bound together (like a Free University of Berlin and a Port Grimaud) in a chain of cause and effect.

However, an important issue, *the* important issue, remains the exclusiveness of both these images, the presumption of prophecy by the one, the assumption of nostalgia by the other. Like the two English images previously observed, the one is nearly all anticipation, the other almost all recollection; and, at this stage, it surely becomes relevant to propose the deep absurdity of this particular split which seems to be more a matter of heroic posture than of anything else.

Certainly it is a type of schism all the more gross because, on each side, there is an entirely false psychology assumed—a type of schism which scarcely helps. For, given that the fantasy of the comprehensive city of deliverance has lead to a situation which is abominable, the problem remains what to do. Reductionist Utopian models will certainly founder in the cultural relativism which, for better or worse, immerses us and it would seem only reasonable to approach such models with the greatest circumspection: the inherent debilitations of any institutionalised *status quo* (more of Levittown, more of Wimbledon, even more of Urbino and Chipping Campden) would also seem to indicate that neither simple “give them what they want” nor unmodified townscape are equipped

with sufficient conviction to provide more than partial answers; and, such being the case with reference to all of the prominent models, it becomes necessary to envisage a strategy which might, hopefully and without disaster, accommodate the ideal and which, plausibly and without devaluation, might respond to what the real might be supposed to be.

In a recent book, *The Art of Memory*,¹ Francis Yates speaks of Gothic cathedrals as mnemonic devices. The bibles and the encyclopedias of both the illiterate and the literate, these buildings were intended to articulate thought by assisting recollection: and, to the degree that they acted as Scholastic classroom aids, it becomes possible to refer to them as having been *theatres of memory*. And the designation is a useful one, because, if today we are only apt to think of buildings as necessarily prophetic, such an alternative mode of thinking may serve to correct our unduly prejudiced naiveté. The building as *theatre of prophecy*, the building as *theatre of memory*—if we are able to conceive of the building as the one, we must, also inherently be able to conceive of it as the other: and, while recognising that without benefit of academic theory, these are both of them the ways in which we habitually interpret buildings, this memory-prophecy theatre distinction might then be carried over into the urbanistic field.

Having said just so much and no more, it goes almost without saying that exponents of the city as prophecy theatre will likely be thought of as radicals, while exponents of the city as memory theatre will, almost certainly, be described as conservatives; but, if there might be some degree of truth in such assumption, it must also be established that block notions of this kind are not really very useful. The mass of mankind is likely to be, at any one time, both conservative and radical, to be preoccupied with the familiar and diverted by the unexpected: and, if we all of us both live in the past and hope for the future (the present being no more than an episode in time), it would seem reasonable that we should accept this condition. For, if without prophecy there can be no hope, then, without memory there can be no communication.

Obvious, trite and sententious though this may be, it was—happily or unhappily—an aspect of the human mind which the early proponents of modern architecture were able to overlook—happily for them, unhappily for us. But, if without such distinctly perfunctory psychology “the new way of building” could never have come into being, there cannot any longer be an excuse for the failure to recognise the complementary relationship which is fundamental to the processes of anticipation and retrospection. Interdependent activities we cannot perform without exercising them both: and no attempt to suppress either in the interest of the other can ever be protractedly successful. We may receive strength from the novelty of prophetic declamation: but the degree of this potency must be strictly related to the known, the perhaps mundane and the necessarily memory-laden context from which it emerges.

The dichotomy of memory-prophecy, so important for modern architecture, might therefore be regarded as entirely illusory, as useful up to a point but academically absurd if pressed: and, if such may be allowed and, if it seems plausible that the ideal city which we carry in our minds should accommodate our known psychological constitution, it would seem to follow that the ideal city which might now be postulated should, at one and the same time, behave as both theatre of prophecy and theatre of memory.

CRISIS OF THE OBJECT: PREDICAMENT OF TEXTURE

We have so far attempted to specify two versions of the Utopian idea: Utopia as an, implicit, object of contemplation and Utopia as an, explicit, instrument of social change: we have then deliberately muddled this distinction by the introduction of fantasies of architecture as anticipation and architecture as retrospection: but briefly to forget these secondary issues: it would be facetious further to indulge speculation in the area of Utopian concern without first directing some attention to the evaluations of Karl Popper. For present purposes these are two essays of the late 1940s, "Utopia and Violence" and "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition":² and it must be a matter of surprise that neither of these seems, so far, to have been cited for its possible commentary upon the architectural and urbanistic problems of today.³

Popper, as might be expected, is hard on Utopia and, correspondingly, soft on tradition: but these essays should also be placed in the context of that massive criticism of simple inductivist visions of science, of all doctrines of historical determinism and of all theorems of the closed society which he has continuously conducted and which increasingly begins to appear as one of the more important twentieth-century constructs. The Viennese liberal, long domiciled in England and using what appears to be a Whiggish theory of the state as the cutting edge of an attack upon Plato, Hegel, and, not so incidentally, the Third Reich, it is in terms of this background that Popper must be understood as the critic of Utopia and the exponent of tradition's usefulness.

For Popper tradition is indispensable—communication rests upon tradition: tradition is related to a felt need for a structured social environment; tradition is the critical vehicle for the betterment of society; the "atmosphere" of any given society is related to tradition: and tradition is somewhat akin to myth—or, to say it in other words, specific traditions are somehow incipient theories which have the value, however imperfectly, of helping to explain society.

But such statements also require to be placed alongside the conception of science from which they derive, the conception of science as not so much the accumulation of facts but as the rigorous criticism of hypotheses. It is hypotheses which discover facts and not *vice versa*; and, seen in this way—so the argument runs—the role of traditions in society is roughly equivalent to that of hypotheses in science. That is: just as the formulation of hypotheses or theories results from the criticism of myth.

"Similarly traditions have the important double function of not only creating a certain order or something like a social structure, but also of giving us something on which we can operate; something that we can criticise and change. (And) just as the invention of myth or theories in the field of natural science has a function—that of helping us to bring order into the events of nature—so has the creation of traditions in the field of society."⁴

And it is presumably for such reasons that a rational approach to tradition becomes contrasted by Popper with the rationalist attempt to transform society by the agency of abstract and Utopian propositions. These are "dangerous and pernicious." Utopia proposes a consensus about objectives: and "It is impossible to determine ends scientifically. There is no scientific way of choosing between two ends..." This being so

the problem of constructing a Utopian blue print cannot possibly be solved by science alone; since we cannot determine the ultimate ends of political actions scientifically

...they will at least partly have the character of religious differences. And there can be no tolerance between these different Utopian religions...the Utopianist must win over or else crush his competitors."⁵

In other words, if Utopia proposes the achievement of abstract goods rather than the eradication of concrete evils, it is apt to be coercive since there can far more easily be a consensus about concrete evils than there can be about abstract goods; and, if Utopia introduces itself as a blueprint for the future, then it is doubly coercive since the future *cannot* be known to us. But, in addition to this, Utopia is particularly dangerous since the invention of Utopias is likely to occur in periods of rapid social change; and urban Utopian blueprints are liable to be rendered obsolete before they can be put into practice, then it is only too probable that the Utopian engineers will proceed to inhibit change—by propaganda, by suppression of dissident opinion, and, if necessary, by physical force.

It is perhaps unfortunate in all this that Popper makes no distinction between Utopia as metaphor and Utopia as prescription; but, this being said, what we are here presented with (though the treatment of tradition is, perhaps, unduly sophisticated and the handling of Utopia certainly a little bitter and abrupt) is, by inference, one of the most completely devastating critiques of the twentieth-century architect and planner.

It is also the critique of a certain contemporary "orthodoxy" which is quite generally diffused. The Popperian position which, in the face of scientism and historicism, insists upon the fallibility of all knowledge *ought* to be reasonably well known; but, if Popper is evidently concerned—in terms of their probable practical results—with certain largely unthinking procedures and attitudes, the intellectual situation which, persistently, he has felt compelled to review is comparatively easy to exhibit.

The announcement by the White House on 13 July 1969 of the creation of the National Goals Research Staff stated the following:

There are increasing numbers of forecasting efforts in both public and private institutions, which provide a growing body of information upon which to base judgements of probable future developments and of choices available.

There is an urgent need to establish a more direct link between the increasingly sophisticated forecasting now being done and the decision making process. The practical importance of establishing such a link is emphasised by the fact that virtually all the critical national problems of today could have been anticipated well in advance of their reaching critical proportions.

An extraordinary array of tools and techniques has been developed by which it becomes increasingly possible to project future trends—and thus to make the kind of informed choices which are necessary if we are to establish mastery over the process of change.

These tools and techniques are gaining widespread use in the social and physical sciences, but they have not been applied systematically to the science of government. The time is at hand when they should be used and when they must be used.⁶

"The science of government," "tools and techniques" which "*must* be used," "sophisticated forecasting," "the kind of informed choices which are necessary if we are

to establish mastery over the process of change": this is [Claude-Henri] Saint-Simon and [G. W. F.] Hegel, the myths of potentially rational society and inherently logical history installed in the most unlikely of high places: and in its naively conservative but simultaneously Neo-Futurist tone, as a popular rendition of what is by now folklore, it might almost have been designed as a target for Popper's critical strategies. For, if "mastery over the process of change" may indeed sound heroic, the strict lack of sense of this idea can only be emphasised: and if this is the simple fact that "mastery over the process of change" would necessarily eliminate all but the most minor and extrinsic changes, then this is the real burden of Popper's position. Simply that in so far as the form of the future depends upon future ideas, this form is not to be anticipated: and that, therefore, the many future oriented fusions of Utopianism and historicism (the ongoing course of history to be subject to rational management) can only operate to restrain any progressive evolution, any genuine emancipation. And it may be at this point that one does distinguish the quintessential Popper, the libertarian critic of historical determinism and strictly inductivist views of scientific method who, surely more than anyone else, has probed and discriminated that crucial complex of historico-scientific fantasies which, for better or worse, has been so active a component of twentieth-century motivation.

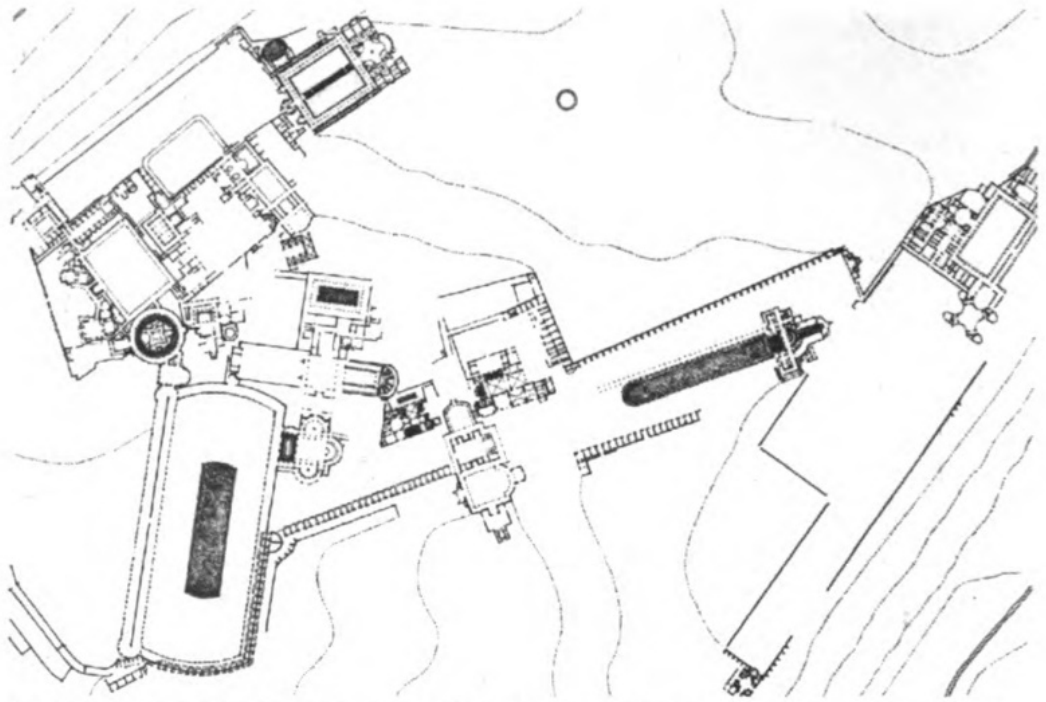
The 1969 statement of the White House (which has been so ironically falsified by events) we conceive of as far from merely an American absurdity. It is a type of statement which is likely to be issued by almost any government of the present day (we can imagine its French and its English editions): and, apart from its "decisionism," it is a statement only too horribly close in its basic presumptions to the general tone of modern architecture and then to the derivative attitudes of the planner.

The roads into the future are, at last, to be well oiled and accident free: there are no longer to be hidden bumps and erratic chicanes: the final truth has been divulged: free from dogmatic presupposition we now, logically, consult only the "facts": and, consulting the "facts," we are able, finally, to project the all-encompassing and never-to-be-disrupted ultimate solution of *total design*. Something a little like this was, and continued to be, modern architecture's *Leitmotif*: and, if whatever it has to do with society may be distinctly mysterious, one can still be left contemplating the respective affiliations of *total politics* and *total architecture*.

Probably, when the account is finally rendered, they will be discovered to have been much the same: but something of total politics and total architecture are present, of necessity, in all Utopian projections. Utopia has never offered options. To repeat: the citizens of Thomas More's Utopia *could not fail to be happy because they could not chose but be good*: and the idea of dwelling in goodness, without capacity for moral choice, has been prone to attend most fantasies, whether metaphorical or literal, of the ideal society.

The maintained endorsements of Utopia are one thing, its criticism is another: but for the architect, of course, the ethical content of the good society has always been something which building was to make evident. Indeed it has, probably, always been his primary reference: for, whatever other controlling fantasies may have merged to assist him—antiquity, tradition, technology—these have invariably been conceived of as aiding and abetting a, in some way, benign or decorous social order.

Thus, not to retreat backwards all the way to Plato and, instead, to find a much more recent *quattrocento* springboard, [Antonio Averlino] Filarete's Sforzinda contains all



While Versailles is a built version of one idea, the Villa Adriana at Tivoli is an accumulation of several ideas. The Villa Adriana presents the demands of the ideal and recognises at the same time the needs of the *ad hoc*. Here are the beginnings of collage.

The garden as a criticism of the city—a criticism which the city later abundantly acknowledged—has not, as yet, received sufficient attention: but, if outside Florence, for instance, this theme is profusely represented, its most extreme affirmation can only be at Versailles, that seventeenth-century criticism of medieval Paris which [Eugène Georges] Haussmann and Napoleon III later so energetically took to heart.

As a prophetic vision of the city, an enormous rendition of Filarete-style Utopia in which trees have come to serve as buildings, as a very literal exaggeration of Utopian decorum. Versailles must now serve as some kind of gear change to initiate a further phase of argument. We have unambiguous, unabashed Versailles. The moral is declared to the world and the advertisement can scarcely be refused. This is total control and the glaring illumination of it. It is the triumph of generality, the prevalence of the overwhelming idea, the suppression of the exception: and the obvious parallel to mount alongside it, for present purposes, is the Villa Adriana at Tivoli. For, if Versailles may be a sketch for total design in a context of total politics, the Villa Adriana attempts to dissimulate all reference to any single controlling idea. The one of them is all unity and convergence: the other is all disparity and divergence: the one supposes itself to be an organism, entire and complete: the other presents itself as an animated dialectic of parts: compared with the single-mindedness of Louis XIV. Hadrian, who proposes the reverse of any "totality," seems only to need an accumulation of the most various fragments.

They are both of them, no doubt, aberrations: they are both of them the products of absolute power, but they are both of them the products—almost the clinical

illustrations—of absolutely different psychologies; and the Louis XIV-Hadrian confrontation perhaps might best be interpreted by a quotation from Isaiah Berlin. In his famous essay Berlin discriminates two personalities: the hedgehog and the fox. *The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing*. This is the text which is chosen for elaboration and made to serve as a pretext for the following:

...there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand think and feel—a single, universal, organising principle in terms of which all that they are and say has significance—and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause: related by no moral or aesthetic principle: these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas which are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously seeking to fit them into or exclude them from any one unchanging...at times fanatical, unitary inner vision. The first kind of intellectual and artistic personality belongs to the hedgehogs, the second to the foxes...⁷

And the great ones of the earth divide fairly equally: Plato, Dante, [Fyodor] Dostoevsky, [Marcel] Proust are, needless to say, hedgehogs: Aristotle, [William] Shakespeare, [Aleksandr] Pushkin, [James] Joyce are foxes. This is the rough discrimination: but, if it is the representatives of literature and philosophy who are the critical concern, the game may be played in other areas also. [Pablo] Picasso, a fox, [Piet] Mondrian, a hedgehog, the figures begin to leap into place; and, as we turn to architecture, the answers are almost entirely predictable. Palladio is a hedgehog, Giulio Romano, a fox; [Nicholas] Hawksmoor, [John] Soane, Philip Webb are probably hedgehogs. [Christopher] Wren, [John] Nash, Norman Shaw almost certainly foxes; and, closer to the present day, while [Frank Lloyd] Wright is unequivocally a hedgehog, [Edwin] Lutyens is just as obviously a fox.

But, to elaborate the results of, temporarily, thinking in such categories, it is as we approach the area of modern architecture that we begin to recognise the impossibility of arriving at any symmetrical balance. For if [Walter] Gropius, Mies, Hannes Meyer, Buckminster Fuller are clearly eminent hedgehogs, then where are the foxes whom we can enter into the same league? The preference is obviously one way. The *single central vision prevails*. One notices a predominance of hedgehogs: but, if one might sometimes feel that fox-like propensities are surrounded with dubiety and, therefore, not to be disclosed, of course there still remains the job of assigning to Le Corbusier his own particular slot, "*whether he is a monist or a pluralist, whether his vision is of one or of many, whether he is of a single substance or compounded of heterogeneous elements*."⁸

These are questions which Berlin asks with reference to [Leo] Tolstoy—questions which (he says) may not be wholly relevant: and then, very tentatively, he produces his hypothesis:

that Tolstoy—as by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog: that his gifts and achievement are one thing, and his beliefs, and consequently his interpretation of his

own achievement, another: and that consequently his ideals have led him, and those whom his genius for persuasion has taken in, into a systematic misinterpretation of what he and others were doing or should be doing.⁹

Like so much other literary criticism shifted into a context of architectural focus, the formula seems to fit: and, if it should not be pushed too far, it can still offer partial explanation. There is Le Corbusier, the architect, with what William Jordy has called "*his witty and collusive intelligence*."¹⁰ This is the person who sets up elaborately pretended Platonic structures only to riddle them with an equally elaborate pretence of empirical detail, the Le Corbusier of multiple asides, cerebral references, and complicated *scherzi*; and then there is Le Corbusier, the urbanist, the deadpan protagonist of completely different strategies who, at a large and public scale, has the minimum of use for all the dialectical tricks and spatial involutions which, invariably, he considered the appropriate adornment of a more private situation. The public world is simple, the private world is elaborate: and, if the private world affects a concern for contingency the would-be public personality long maintained an almost too heroic disdain for any taint of the specific.

But, if the situation of *complex house-simple city* seems strange (when one might have thought that the reverse was applicable) and, if to explain the discrepancy between Le Corbusier's architecture and his urbanism one might propose that he was, yet again, a fox assuming hedgehog disguise for the purposes of public appearance, this is to build a digression into a digression. We have noticed a relative absence of foxes at the present day; but, though this second digression may later be put to use, the whole fox-hedgehog diversion was initiated for ostensibly other purposes. It was initiated to establish Hadrian and Louis XIV as, more or less, free-acting representatives of these two psychological types who were autocratically equipped to indulge their inherent propensities, and then to ask of their products: which of these two might be felt the more exemplary for today—the accumulation of set pieces in collision or the total coordinated display?

The Villa Adriana is a miniature Rome. It plausibly reproduces all the collisions of set pieces and all of the random empirical happenings which the city so lavishly exhibited. It is a conservative endorsement of Rome where Versailles is a radical criticism of Paris. At Versailles all is design, total and complete, but at Tivoli, as in the Rome of Hadrian, design and non-design qualify and amplify their respective statements. Hadrian is one of Françoise Choay's "culturalists," concerned with the emotive and the usable; but for Louis XIV, the "progressivist" (assisted by [Jean-Baptiste] Colbert), it is the rationalisable present and future which exhibit themselves as the exacting idea. Random idiosyncrasy, local diversity, have little to say to this state of mind: and it is when the rationalisations of a Colbert become handed down by [Anne-Robert-Jacques] Turgot to Saint-Simon and [Auguste] Comte that one begins to see something of Versailles' prophetic enormity.

For certainly, there, at Versailles, was anticipated all the myth of the rationally ordered and "scientific" society, the accident-free society ruled by knowledge and information in which debate has become superfluous; and, if we then proceed to drench this myth with fantasies of historical evolution and further to charge it with the threat of damnation or the cult of crisis, we might begin to approach a state of mind not too remote from that which presided over the origins of modern architecture. But, if it

becomes increasingly hard not to smile at the old story that, in order to avert impending doom, the enterprises of mankind must be brought into closer alignment with the inevitable forces of blissful destiny, then, if we are emancipated by our derision, it might become possible (the idea is advanced with all due hesitation) to consult the promotings, first of all of taste and, secondly, commonsense.

Taste is, of course, no longer—and was, perhaps never—a serious or substantial matter and talk of commonsense should equally inspire reservations: but, if both of them are the crudest of concepts, they may still appropriately serve as the crudest of blunt instruments for yet another approach to the Villa Adriana. Thus, given two conditions of equal size and endlessness as those at Versailles and Tivoli, it is almost certain that the uninhibited aesthetic preference of today is for the structural discontinuities and the multiple syncopated excitements which the Villa Adriana presents; and, in the same way, whatever may be the conscientious and contemporary concern for *the single central vision*, for a condition of complete, holistic and novel continuity, it should be apparent that the manifold disjunctions of Hadrian's villa, the sustained inference that it was built by several people (or régimes) at different times, its seeming combination of the schizoid and the reasonable, might recommend it to the attention of political societies where political power frequently—and mercifully—changes hands.

Given the anti-Utopian polemic of Karl Popper, given the—fundamentally—anti-hedgehog innuendo of Isaiah Berlin, the bias of this argument should now be clear: it is better to think of an aggregation of small, and even contradictory set pieces (almost like the products of different régimes) than to entertain fantasies about total and “faultless” solutions which the condition of politics can only abort. Its implication is an installation of the Villa Adriana as some sort of model presenting the demands of the ideal and the needs of the *ad hoc*; and its further implication is that some such installation begins, politically, to be necessary.

But, of course, the Villa Adriana is not simply a physical collision of set pieces. It is not merely a reproduction of Rome. For it also presents an iconography as complex as its plan. Here the reference is supposed to be to Egypt, there we are supposed to be in Syria, and, elsewhere, we might be in Athens: and thus, while *physically* the villa presents itself as a version of the Imperial metropolis, it further operates as an ecumenical illustration of the mix provided by the Empire and, almost, as a series of mementos of Hadrian's travels. Which is to say that, in Villa Adriana, apart from physical collisions (though dependent on them), we are, above all else, in the presence of a highly impacted condition of symbolic reference: and which is further to introduce an argument that must be deferred: the argument that, in Villa Adriana, we are in the presence of something like what, today, it is customary to speak of as *collage*.

COLLISION CITY AND THE POLITICS OF BRICOLAGE

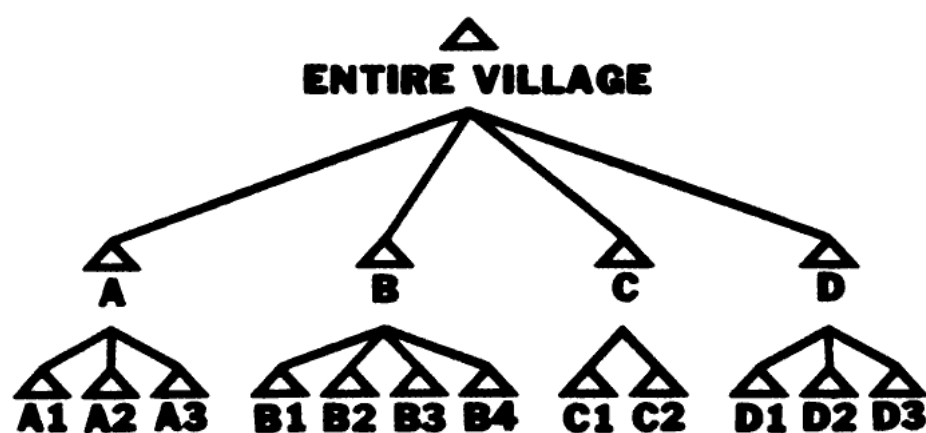
The cult of crisis in the inter-war period: before it is too late society must rid itself of outmoded sentiment, thought, technique: and if, in order to prepare for its impending deliverance, it must be ready to make *tabula rasa*, the architect as key figure in this transformation, must be ready to assume the historical lead. For the built world of human habitation and venture is the very cradle of the new order and, if he is properly to rock it, the architect must be ready to come forward as a front-line combatant in the battle

for humanity. Perhaps, while claiming to be scientific, the architect had never previously operated within quite so fantastic a psycho-political milieu: but, if this is to parenthesise, it was for such reasons—Pascalian reasons of the heart—that the city became hypothesised as no more than the result of “scientific” findings and a completely glad “human” collaboration. Such became the activist Utopian total design. Perhaps an impossible vision: and for those who, during the past fifty or sixty years (many of them must be dead) have been awaiting the establishment of this city, it must have become increasingly clear that the promise—such as it is—cannot be kept. Or so one might have thought: but, although the total design message has had a somewhat spotted career and has often elicited scepticism, it has remained, and possibly to this day, as the psychological substratum of urban theory and its practical application. Indeed it has been so little repressible that, in the last few years, a newly inspired and wholly literal version of this message has been enabled to appear as renditions of the “systems” approach and other “methodological” finds.

We have largely introduced Karl Popper to support an anti-Utopian argument with which we do not wholly agree; but in our interpretation of the activist Utopia our indebtedness to Popper’s position should surely be evident. It is a position which, particularly when stated at length as in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957),¹¹ is hard to evade; and one might have thought that the idea of modern architecture as science, as potentially part of a unified comprehensive science, ideally like physics (the best of all possible sciences) could scarcely have protracted itself to survive into a world which also included the Popperian critique of just such fantasies. But this is to misunderstand the hermetic and retarded nature of architectural debate: and, in those areas where Popperian criticism appears to be unknown and where the “science” of early modern architecture is also presumed to be painfully deficient, it goes without saying that the problem-solving methods proposed are laborious and often extended.

One has only to contemplate the scrupulousness of the operation in a text such as *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*¹² to get the picture. Obviously a “clean” process dealing with “clean” information, atomised, cleaned, and then cleaned again, everything is ostensibly wholesome and hygienic; but, resulting from the inhibiting characteristics of commitment, especially physical commitment, the product seems never to be quite so prominent as the process. And something comparable might be said about the related production of stems, webs, grids, and honeycombs which, in the later ’60s, became so conspicuous an industry. Both are attempts to avoid any imputation of prejudice: and if, in the first case, empirical facts are presumed to be value-free and finally ascertainable, in the second, the co-ordinates of a grid are awarded an equal impartiality. For, like the lines of longitude and latitude, it seems to be hoped that these will, in some way, eliminate any bias, or even responsibility, in a specification of the infilling detail.

But, if the ideally neutral observer is surely a critical fiction, if among the multiplicity of phenomena with which we are surrounded we observe what we wish to observe, if our judgements are inherently selective because the quantity of factual information is finally indigestible, and if any literal usage of a “neutral” grid labours under approximate problems, the myth of the architect as eighteenth-century natural philosopher, with all his little measuring rods, balances, and retorts, as both messiah and



A1 contains requirements 7, 53, 57, 59, 60, 72, 125, 126, 128.
 A2 contains requirements 31, 34, 36, 52, 54, 80, 94, 106, 136.
 A3 contains requirements 37, 38, 50, 55, 77, 91, 103.
 B1 contains requirements 39, 40, 41, 44, 51, 118, 127, 131, 138.
 B2 contains requirements 30, 35, 46, 47, 61, 97, 98.

Diagram from Christopher Alexander's *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*.

scientist, Moses and [Isaac] Newton (a myth which became all the more ludicrous after its annexation by the architect's less well-pedigreed cousin, the planner), must now be brought into proximity with *The Savage Mind* and with everything which bricolage represents.

"There still exists among ourselves," says Claude Lévi-Strauss,

an activity which on the technical plane gives us quite a good understanding of what a science we prefer to call "prior" rather than "primitive" could have been on the plane of speculation. This is what is commonly called "bricolage" in French;¹³

and he then proceeds to an extended analysis of the different objectives of *bricolage* and science, of the respective roles of the "bricoleur" and the engineer.

In its old sense the verb "bricoler" applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting, and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying, or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. And in our time the "bricoleur" is still someone who works with his hands and used devious means compared to those of the craftsman.¹⁴

Now there is no intention to place the entire weight of the argument which follows upon Lévi-Strauss's observations. Rather the intention is to promote an identification which may, up to a point, prove useful: and, so much so, that, if one may be inclined to recognise Le Corbusier as a fox in hedgehog disguise, one may also be willing to envisage a parallel attempt at camouflage: the "bricoleur" disguised as engineer.

Engineers fabricate the tools of their time....Our engineers are healthy and virile, active, and useful, balanced and happy in their work...our engineers produce architecture for they employ a mathematical calculation which derives from natural law.¹⁵

Such is an almost entirely representative statement of early modern architecture's most conspicuous prejudice. But then compare Lévi-Strauss:

The *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks: but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with "whatever is at hand," that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. The set of the *bricoleur's* means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project (which would pre-suppose besides, that, as in the case of the engineer, there were, at least in theory, as many sets of tools and materials, or "instrumental sets," as there are different kinds of projects). It is to be defined only by its potential use...because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that "they may always come in handy." Such elements are specialised up to a point, sufficiently for the *bricoleur* not to need the equipment and knowledge of all trades and professions, but not enough for each of them to have only one definite and determinate use. They represent a set of actual and possible relations; they are "operators," but they can be used for any operations of the same type.¹⁶

For our purposes it is unfortunate that Lévi-Strauss does not lend himself to reasonable laconic quotation. For the *bricoleur*, who certainly finds a representative in the "odd job man," is also very much more than this. "It is common knowledge that the artist is both something of a scientist and of a 'bricoleur';¹⁷ but, if artistic creation lies mid-way between science and *bricolage*, this is not to imply that the *bricoleur* is "backward." "It might be said that the engineer questions the universe while the 'bricoleur' addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours";¹⁸ but it must also be insisted that there is no question of primacy here. Simply the scientist and the *bricoleur* are to be distinguished

by the inverse functions which they assign to events and structures as means and ends, the scientist creating events...by means of structures and the "bricoleur" creating structures by means of events.¹⁹

But we are here, now, very far from the notion of an exponential, increasingly precise "science" (a speedboat which architecture and urbanism are to follow like highly inexpert water skiers); and, instead, we have not only a confrontation of the *bricoleur's* "savage mind" with the "domesticated" mind of the engineer, but also a useful indication that these two modes of thought are not representatives of a progressive serial (the engineer illustrating a perfection of the *bricoleur*, etc.) but are, in fact, necessarily co-existent and complementary conditions of the mind. In other words, we might be about to arrive at some approximation of Lévi-Strauss's "pensée logique au niveau du sensible."

For, if we can divest ourselves of the deceptions of professional *amour propre* and accepted academic theory, the description of the *bricoleur* is far more a "real-life" specification of what the architect-urbanist is and does than any fantasy deriving from "methodology" and "systemics." Indeed the predicament of architecture which, because it is always in some way or another, concerned with amelioration, with by some standard, however dimly perceived, making things better, with how things ought to be, is always hopelessly involved with value judgements and can never be scientifically resolved—least of all in terms of any simple empirical theory of "facts." And, if this is the case with reference to architecture, then, in relation to urbanism (which is not even concerned in making things stand up) the question of any scientific resolution of its problems can only become more acute. For, if the notion of a "final" solution through a definitive accumulation of all data is, evidently, an epistemological chimera, if certain aspects of information will invariably remain undiscriminated or undisclosed, and if the inventory of "facts" can never be complete because of the rates of change and obsolescence, then, here and now, it surely might be possible to assert that the prospects of scientific city planning should, in reality, be regarded as equivalent to the prospects of scientific politics.

For, if planning can barely be more scientific than the political society of which it forms an agency, in the case of neither politics nor planning can there be sufficient information acquired before action becomes necessary. In neither case can performance await an ideal future formulation of the problem as it may, at last, be resolved; and, if this is because the very possibility of that future where such formulation might be made depends on imperfect action now, then this is only once more to intimate the role of *bricolage* which politics so much resembles and city planning surely should.

But are the alternatives of "progressivist" total design (propelled by hedgehogs?) and "culturalist" *bricolage* (propelled by foxes?) genuinely, at the last analysis, all that we have available? We believe that they are; and we suppose that the political implications of total design are nothing short of devastating. No ongoing condition of compromise and expediency, of wilfulness and arbitrariness, but a supremely irresistible combination of "science" and "destiny," such is the unacknowledged myth of the activist or historicist Utopia: and, in this complete sense, total design was, and is, make believe. For, on a mundane level, total design can only mean total control, and control not by abstractions relating to the absolute value of science or history but by governments of man; and, if the point scarcely requires emphasis, it can, still, not be too strongly asserted that total design (however much it may be loved) assumes for its implementation a level of centralised political and economic control which, given the presumption of political power as it now exists anywhere in the world, can only be considered thoroughly unacceptable.

"The most tyrannical government of all, the government of nobody, the totalitarianism of technique." Hannah Ahrendt's image of a horror may also now come to mind: and, in this context, what then of "culturalist" *bricolage*? One may anticipate its dangers; but, as a deliberate recognition of the deviousness of history and change, of the certainty of future sharp temporal caesuras, of the full tonality of societal gesture, a conception of the city as intrinsically, and even ideally, a work of *bricolage* begins to deserve serious attention. For, if total design may represent the surrender of logical empiricism to a most unempirical myth and if it may seem to envisage the future (when all will be known) as a sort of dialectic of nondebate, it is because the *bricoleur* (like the fox) can entertain no such prospects of conclusive synthesis, because, rather than with one world—infinately extended though subjected to the same generalisations—his very activity implies a willingness and an ability to deal with a plurality of closed finite systems (*the collection of oddments left over from human endeavour*) that, for the time being at least, his behaviour may offer an important model.

Indeed if we are willing to recognise the methods of science and *bricolage* as concomitant propensities, if we are willing to recognise that they are, both of them, modes of address to problems, if we are willing (and it may be hard) to concede equality between the "civilised" mind (with its presumptions of logical seriality) and the "savage" mind (with its analogical leaps), then, in re-establishing *bricolage* alongside science, it might even be possible to suppose that the way for a truly useful future dialectic could be prepared.

A truly useful dialectic? The idea is simply the conflict of contending powers, the almost fundamental conflict of interest sharply stipulated, the legitimate suspicion about others' interests, from which the democratic process—such as it is—proceeds: and then the corollary to this idea is no more than banal: if such is the case, that is if democracy is compounded of libertarian enthusiasm and legalistic doubt, if it is inherently a collision of points of view and acceptable as such, then why not allow a theory of contending powers (all of them visible) as likely to establish a more ideally comprehensive city of the mind than any which has, as yet, been invented?

With the Villa Adriana already in mind, the proposition leads us (like Pavlov's dogs) automatically to the condition of seventeenth-century Rome, to that inextricable fusion of imposition and accommodation, that highly successful and resilient traffic jam of intentions, an anthology of closed compositions and *ad hoc* stuff in between which is simultaneously a dialectic of ideal types, plus a dialectic of ideal types with empirical context; and the consideration of seventeenth-century Rome (the complete city with the assertive identity of its sub-divisions: Trastevere, Sant' Eustachio, Borgo, Campo Marzo, Campitelli...) leads to the equivalent interpretation of its predecessor where forum and *thermae* pieces lie around in a condition of inter-dependence, independence, and multiple interpretability. And Imperial Rome is, of course, far the more dramatic statement. For, with its more abrupt collisions, more acute disjunctions, its more expansive set pieces, its more radically discriminated matrix and general lack of "sensitive" inhibition, Imperial Rome, far more than the city of the High Baroque, illustrates something of the *bricolage* mentality at its most lavish—an obelisk from here, a column from there, a range of statues from somewhere else, even at the level of detail the mentality is fully exposed: and, in this connection, it is amusing to recollect how the influence of a whole school of



Seventeenth-century Rome exemplifies the dialectic of ideal urban types. It is a complete city where the corporate parts assert their own identity.

historians was, at one time, strenuously dedicated to presenting the ancient Romans as inherently nineteenth-century engineers, precursors of Gustave Eiffel, who had somehow, and unfortunately, lost their way.

So 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. For, while it is recognised that what we have here are the products of a specific topography and two particular, though not wholly separable cultures, it is also supposed that we are in the presence of a style of argument which is not lacking in universality. That is: while the physique and the politics of Rome provide perhaps the most graphic example of collusive fields and *interstitial debris*, there are calmer versions.

Rome, for instance, is—if you wish to see it so—an imploded version of London: and the Rome-London model may, of course, perfectly well be expanded to provide a comparable interpretation of a Houston or a Los Angeles. But to introduce detail would be, unduly, to protract the argument: and simply to terminate: rather than any Hegelian

"indestructible bond of the beautiful and the true," rather than ideas of a permanent and future unity, we would prefer to consider the complementary possibilities of consciousness and sublimated conflict: and, if there is here urgent need for both the fox and the *bricoleur*, it is just possible that, in the face of prevailing scientism and conspicuous *laissez aller*, their activities could provide the true and constant *Survival Through Design*.

COLLAGE CITY AND THE RECONQUEST OF TIME

The tradition of modern architecture, always professing a distaste for art, has characteristically conceived of society and the city in highly conventional artistic terms—unity, continuity, system: but there is an alternative and apparently far more "art" prone method of procedure which, so far as one can see, has never felt any need for such literal alignment with "basic" principles. This alternative and predominant tradition of modernity—one thinks of such names as Picasso, [Igor] Stravinsky, [T.S.] Eliot, Joyce—exists at a considerable remove from the ethos of modern architecture: and, because it makes of obliquity and irony a virtue, it by no means conceives itself to be equipped with a private pipe line to either the truths of science or to the patterns of history.

"I have never made trials nor experiments." "I can hardly understand the importance given the word research." "Art is a lie which makes us realise the truth, at least the truth it is given us to understand." "The artist must know the manner of convincing others of the truthfulness of his lies."²⁰ With such statements as these of Picasso's one might be reminded of [Samuel Taylor] Coleridge's definition of a successful work of art (it might also be the definition of a successful political achievement) as that which encourages "*a willing suspension of disbelief*." The Coleridgean mood may be more English, more optimistic, less drenched with Spanish irony: but the drift of thought—the product of an apprehension of reality as far from tractable—is much the same: and, of course, as soon as one begins to think of things in this way, all but the most entrenched pragmatist gradually becomes very far removed from the advertised state of mind and the happy certainties of what is sometimes described as modern architecture's "mainstream." For one now enters a territory from which the architect and the urbanist have, for the most part, excluded themselves. The vital mood is now completely transformed. One is no less in the twentieth century; but the blinding self-righteousness of unitary conviction is at last placed alongside a more tragic cognition of the dazzling and the scarcely to be resolved multiformity of experience.

The two formulations of modernity which elaborate themselves may thus be more or less characterised; and, allowing for two contrasted modes of "seriousness," one may now think of Picasso's *Bicycle Seat* (Bull's Head) of 1944:

You remember that bull's head I exhibited recently? Out of the handlebars and the bicycle seat I made a bull's head which everybody recognised as a bull's head. Thus a metamorphosis was completed; and now I would like to see another metamorphosis take place in the opposite direction. Suppose my bull's head is thrown on the scrap heap. Perhaps some day fellow will come along and say: "why there's something that would come in very handy for the handlebars of my bicycle..." and so a double metamorphosis would have been achieved."²¹

Remembrance of former function and value (bicycles and minotaurs); shifting context: an attitude which encourages the composite; an exploitation and re-cycling of meaning (has there ever been enough to go around?): desuetude of function with corresponding agglomeration of reference: memory: anticipation: the connectedness of memory and wit: this is a laundry list of reactions to Picasso's proposition: and, since it is a proposition evidently addressed to "people," it is in terms such as these, in terms of pleasures remembered and values desired, of a dialectic between past and future, of an impacting of iconographic content, of a temporal as well as a spatial collision, that, resuming an earlier argument, one might proceed to specify an ideal city of the mind.

With Picasso's image one asks: what is "false" and what is "true," what is "antique" and what is "of today": and it is because of inability to make half-way adequate reply to this pleasing difficulty that one is obliged, finally, to identify the problem of composite presence (already prefigured at the Villa Adriana) in terms of *collage*. Collage and the architect's conscience, collage as technique and collage as state of mind: Lévi-Strauss tells us that "*the intermittent fashion for 'collages,' originating when craftsmanship was dying, could not...be anything but the transposition of 'bricolage' into the realms of contemplation*":²² and, if the twentieth-century architect has been the reverse of willing to think of himself as a bricoleur, it is in this context that one must also place his frigidity in relation to a major twentieth-century discovery. Collage has seemed to be lacking in sincerity, to represent a corruption of moral principles, an adulteration. One thinks of Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* of 1911-12, his first collage, and begins to understand why.

In analysing this production, Alfred Barr speaks of:

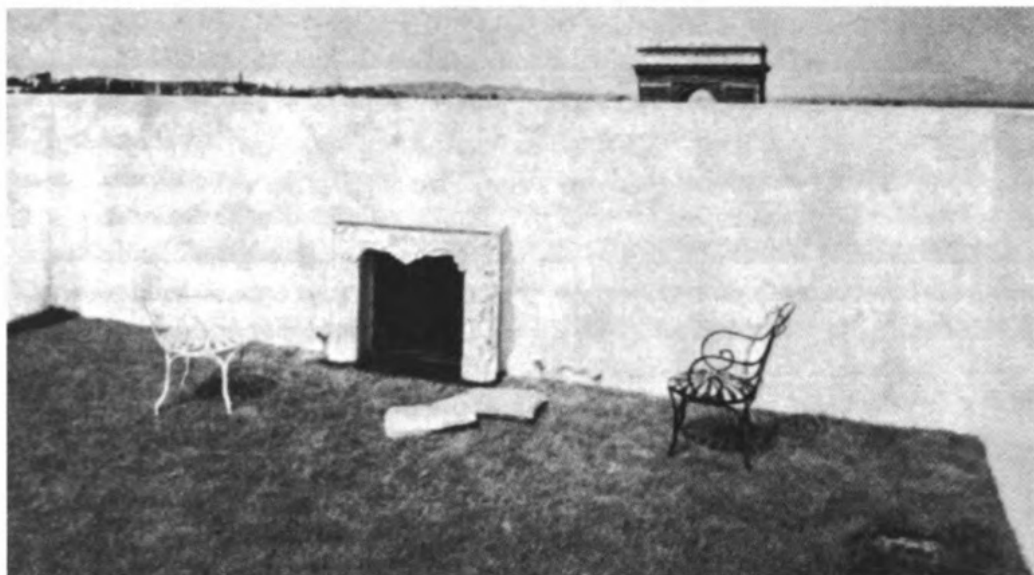
...the section of chair caning which is neither real nor painted but is actually a piece of oil-cloth facsimile pasted on to the canvas and then partly painted over. Here in one picture Picasso juggles reality and abstraction in two media and at four different levels or ratios. (And) if we stop to think which is the most "real" we find ourselves moving from aesthetic to metaphysical contemplation. For what seems most real is most false and what seems most remote from everyday reality is perhaps the most real since it is *least an imitation*.²³

And the oilcloth facsimile of chair caning, an *objet trouvé* snatched from the underworld of "low" culture and catapulted into the superworld of "high" art, might illustrate the architect's dilemma. For collage is simultaneously innocent and devious.

Indeed, among architects, only that great straddler Le Corbusier, sometimes hedgehog, sometimes fox, has displayed any sympathy towards this kind of thing. His buildings, though not his city plans, are loaded with the results of a process which might be considered more or less equivalent to that of collage. Objects and episodes are obtrusively imported and, while they retain the overtones of their source and origin, they gain also a wholly new impact from their changed context. In, for instance, the Ozenfant studio one is confronted with a mass of allusions and references which it would seem are all basically brought together by collage means.

Disparate objects held together by various means, "*physical, optical, psychological,*"

the oilcloth with its sharp focused facsimile detail and its surface apparently so rough yet actually so smooth,...partly absorbed into both the painted surface and the painted forms by letting both overlap it:²⁴



Le Corbusier as collagiste in his solarium for the De Beistégui penthouse.

with very slight modifications (for oilcloth facsimile substitute fake industrial glazing, for painted surface substitute wall, etc.), Alfred Barr's observations could be directly carried over into interpretation of the Ozenfant studio. And further illustrations of Le Corbusier as *collagiste* cannot be hard to find: the too obvious De Beistégui penthouse: the roofscapes—ships and mountains—of Poissy and Marseilles, random rubble at the Porte Molitor and the Pavillon Suisse; an interior from Bordeaux-Pessac; and particularly, the Nestlé exhibition pavilion of 1928.

But, of course beyond Le Corbusier the evidences of this state of mind are sparse and have been scarcely well received. One thinks of [Berthold] Lubetkin at Highpoint 2 with his Erectheion caryatids and pretended imitations of the housepainter imitating wood: one thinks of Moretti at the Casa del Girasole with its simulated antique fragments in the *piano rustico*; and one thinks of [Franco] Albini at the Palazzo Rosso. Also one may think of Charles Moore. But the list is not extensive and its briefness makes admirable testimony. It is a commentary upon exclusiveness. For collage, often a method of paying attention to the leftovers of the world, of preserving their integrity and equipping them with dignity, of compounding matter of factness and cerebrality, a convention and a breach of convention, necessarily operates unexpectedly. A rough method, "a kind of *discordia concors*, a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike," Samuel Johnson's remarks upon the poetry of John Donne, which could also be remarks upon Stravinsky, Eliot, Joyce, upon much of the programme of Synthetic Cubism, are indicative of the absolute reliance of collage upon a juggling of norms and recollections, upon a backward look which, for those who think of history and the future as exponential progression towards ever more perfect simplicity, can only prompt the judgement that collage, for all its psychological virtuosity (Anna Livia, all alluvial), is a wilfully interjected impediment to the strict route of evolution.

And the argument is obviously that between two conceptions of time. On the one hand time becomes the metronome of progress, its serial aspects are given cumulative and dynamic presence; while, on the other, though sequence and chronology are recognised for the facts which they are, time, deprived of some of its linear imperatives, is allowed to re-arrange itself according to experimental schemata. In terms of the one argument the commission of an anachronism is the ultimate of all possible sins. In terms of the other the conception of date is of minor consequence. [Filippo] Marinetti's:

When lives have to be sacrificed we are not saddened if before our minds shines the magnificent harvest of a superior life which will arise from their deaths....We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind...we are already living in the absolute, since we have already created eternal omnipresent speed. We sing of great crowds agitated by work; the multi-coloured and polyphonic surf of revolution.²⁵

and his later:

The victory of Vittorio Veneto and the coming to power of Fascism constitute the realisation of the minimum Futurist programme...

Futurism is strictly artistic and ideological....Prophets and forerunners of the great Italy of today, we Futurists are happy to salute in our not yet forty-year-old prime minister a marvellous Futurist temperament

might be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the one argument: and Picasso's

To me there is no past and no future in art....The several manners which I have used in my art must not be considered as an evolution or as steps towards an unknown ideal of painting....All I have ever made was made for the present and with the hope that it will always remain in the present.²⁶

could be allowed to represent an extreme statement of the other. In theological terms, the one argument is eschatological, the other incarnational; but, while they both of them may be necessary, the cooler and more comprehensive nature of the second argument might still excite attention. *The second argument might include the first; but the reverse can never be true*, and, with so much said, one might now approach collage as a serious instrument.

Presented with Marinetti's chronolatry and Picasso's a-temporality: presented with Popper's critique of historicism (which is also Futurism/futurism): presented with the difficulties of both Utopia and tradition, with the problems of both violence and atrophy: presented with alleged libertarian impulse and alleged need for the security of order; presented with the sectarian tightness of the architect's ethical corset and with more reasonable visions of catholicity; presented with contraction and expansion; we ask what other resolution of social problems is possible outside the limitations of collage. Limitations which should be obvious enough; but, still, admitted limitations which prescribe and ensure an open territory.

It is suggested that a collage approach, an approach in which objects (and attitudes) are conscripted or seduced from out of their context is—at the present day—the only way of dealing with the ultimate problems of either or both Utopia and tradition; and the provenance of the architectural objects introduced into the social collage need not be of great consequence. It relates to taste and conviction. The objects can be aristocratic or they can be “folkish,” academic, or popular. Whether they originate in Pergamum or Dahomey, in Detroit or Dubrovnik, whether their implications are of the twentieth or the fifteenth century, need be no great matter. Societies and persons assemble themselves according to their own interpretations of absolute reference and traditional value; and, up to a point, collage accommodates both hybrid display and the requirements of self-determination.

But up to a point: for if the city of collage may be more hospitable than the city of modern architecture, if it might be a means of accommodating emancipation and allowing all parts of a pluralist situation their own legitimate expression, it cannot any more than any other human institution be completely hospitable. For the ideally open city, like the ideally open society is just as much a figment of the imagination as its opposite. The open and the closed society, either envisaged as practical possibilities, are both of them the caricatures of contrary ideals: and it is to the realm of caricature that one should choose to relegate all extreme fantasies of either emancipation or control. Thus, the bulk of Popper’s arguments in favour of the emancipatory interest and the open society must surely be conceded; but, while the need for the reconstruction of an operative critical theory after its long negation by scientism, historicism, psychologism, should be evident, if we are concerned with the production of an open city for an open society, we may still be concerned with an imbalance in Popper’s general position comparable to that in his critiques of tradition and Utopia. This can seem to be a too exclusive focus on what, after all, are highly idealised empirical procedures: and a corresponding unwillingness to attempt any construction of positive ideal types.

It was the lavish perspectives of cultural time, the historical depths and profundities of Europe (or wherever else culture was presumed to be located) as against the exotic insignificance of “the rest,” which most furnished previous ages of architecture: and it has been the opposite condition which has distinguished that of our own—a willingness to abolish almost all the taboos of physical distance, the barriers of space, and then, alongside this, an equal determination to erect the most impervious of temporal frontiers. One thinks of that chronological iron curtain which in the minds of the devout, quarantines modern architecture from all the infections of free-wheeling temporal association: but, while one may recognise its former justification (identity, incubation, the hot house), the reasons for artificially maintaining such a temperature of enthusiasm can now only begin to seem very remote. But when one recognises that restriction of free trade, whether in space or time, cannot forever, be profitably sustained, that without free trade the diet becomes restricted and provincialised, the survival of the imagination endangered, and that, ultimately, there must ensue some kind of insurrection of the senses, this is only to identify one aspect of the situation—a likely aspect, an aspect as it might be conceived by Popper, and an aspect from which the reasonably sensitive might well shrink. For is an acceptance of free trade to imply absolute dependence upon it: and are the benefits of free trade to be followed by no more than a rampage of the libido?

Up to a point the Popperian social philosophy is sympathetic. It is an affair of attack and *détente*, of attack upon attitudes not making for *détente*. But such an intellectual position which, simultaneously, envisages the existence of heavy industry and Wall Street (as traditions to be criticised) and postulates the existence of an ideal theatre of argument (a Rousseau version of the Swiss canton complete with organic *Tagesatzung*?) may also inspire scepticism.

The [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau version of the Swiss canton (which had very little use for Rousseau), the comparable New England town meeting (white paint and witch hunt?), the eighteenth-century House of Commons (not exactly representative), the ideal academic faculty meeting (what to say about that?): undoubtedly these—along with miscellaneous soviets, kibbutzim, and other references to tribal society—belong to the few theatres of logical and equal discourse so far projected or erected. But, if there should obviously be more of them, then, while one speculates about their architecture, one is also compelled to ask whether these are simply *traditional* constructs. Which is first to intrude the ideal dimension of these various theatres; and which is then to ask whether *specific* traditions (awaiting criticism) are in any way conceivable without that great body of anthropological tradition involving magic, ritual, and the centrality of ideal type, and presuming the Utopian mandala as incipient presence.

Since, though it may not be entirely apparent, we talk about a condition of active equilibrium, the ideal Swiss canton of the mind and the New England community of the picture postcard must now clamour for at least a brief attention. The ideal Swiss canton of the mind, trafficked but isolated, and the New England village of the picture postcard, closed but open to all the imports of mercantile venture, are reputed to have always maintained a stubborn and calculated balance of identity and advantage. That is: to survive they could only present two faces. Which, because it is a qualification that must be laid upon the ideas of free trade and the open society, could, at this point, allow occasion to recall Lévi-Strauss's precarious "balance between structure and event, necessity and contingency, the internal and the external..."²⁷

Now a collage technique, by intention if not by definition, insists upon the centrality of just such a balancing act. A balancing act? But:

Wit, you know, is the unexpected copulation of ideas, the discovery of some occult relation between images in appearance remote from each other: and an effusion of wit, therefore, presupposes an accumulation of knowledge; a memory stored with notions, which the imagination may cull out to compose new assemblages. Whatever may be the native vigour of the mind, she can never form many combinations from few ideas, as many changes can never be rung upon a few bells. Accident may indeed sometimes produce a lucky parallel or a striking contrast; but these gifts of chance are not frequent, and he that has nothing of his own, and yet condemns himself to needless expenses, must live upon loans or theft.²⁸

Samuel Johnson, again, provides a far better definition of something very like collage than any we are capable of producing. His observations propose a commerce in which all components retain an identity enriched by intercourse, in which their respective roles may be continually transposed, in which the focus of illusion is in constant

fluctuation with the axis of reality; and surely some such state of mind should inform all approaches to both Utopia and tradition.

We think again of Hadrian. We think of the "private" and diverse scene at Tivoli. At the same time we think of the Mausoleum (Castel Sant' Angelo) and the Pantheon in their metropolitan locations. And particularly we think of the Pantheon, of its oculus. Which may lead one to contemplate the publicity of necessarily singular intention (keeper of Empire) and the privacy of elaborate personal interests—a situation which is not at all like that of *ville radiieuse* versus Garches.

Habitually Utopia, whether Platonic or Marxian, has been conceived of as *axis mundi* or as *axis istoriae*; but, if in this way it has operated like all totemic, traditionalist and uncriticised aggregations of ideas, if its existence has been poetically necessary and politically deplorable, then this is only to assert the idea that a collage technique by accommodating a whole range of *axis mundi* (all of them vest pocket Utopias—Swiss canton, New England village, Dome of the Rock, Place Vendôme, Campidoglio, etc.) might be a means of permitting us the enjoyment of Utopian poetics without our being obliged to suffer the embarrassment of Utopian politics. Which is to say that, because collage is a method deriving its virtue from its irony, because it seems to be a technique for using things and simultaneously disbelieving in them, it is also a strategy which can allow Utopia to be dealt with as image, to be dealt with in *fragments* without our having to accept it *in toto*, which is further to suggest that collage could even be a strategy which, by supporting the Utopian illusion of changelessness and finality, might even fuel a reality of change, motion, action and history.

- 1 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London and Chicago: 1966), 79.
- 2 Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York: 1962).
- 3 Stanford Anderson, "Architecture and Tradition That Isn't Trad Dad," *Architectural Association Journal* vol. 80, no. 892 (1965) constitutes a significant exception.
- 4 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, op. cit., 131.
- 5 Ibid., 358–360.
- 6 *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon*, 1969, no. 265. Statement of the Establishment of the National Goals Research Staff.
- 7 Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: 1957), 7.
- 8 Ibid., 10.
- 9 Ibid., 14.
- 10 William Jordy, "The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture of the Twenties and its Continuing Influence," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol. XXII, no. 3 (1963).
- 11 Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: 1959), originally published as *Logik der Forschung* (Vienna: 1934); *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: 1957).
- 12 Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge: 1964).
- 13 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: 1969), 16.
- 14 Ibid., 16.
- 15 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: 1927), 18–19.
- 16 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, op. cit., 17–18.
- 17 Ibid., 22.
- 18 Ibid., 19.
- 19 Ibid., 22.
- 20 Alfred Barr, *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: 1946), 271.

- 21 Ibid., 241.
- 22 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, op. cit.
- 23 Barr, *Picasso*, op. cit., 79.
- 24 Ibid., 79.
- 25 F.T. Marinetti, from the Futurist Manifesto 1909 and from appendix to A. Bellramelli, *L'uomo Nuovo* (Milan: 1923). Both quotations extracted from James Joll, *Three Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: 1960).
- 26 Barr, *Picasso*, op. cit., 79-80.
- 27 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, op. cit., 30.
- 28 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* no. 194 (25 January 1752).

INTRODUCTION

Contextualism: Urban Ideals + Deformations
Thomas L. Schumacher

This manifesto presents the evolving ideas (circa 1970) of Colin Rowe and his graduate students in the Cornell University Urban Design Studio with regard to building in the context of the city. Their reappraisal of modern urbanism called for an end to the destruction of center city areas by new construction, and proposed an alternate strategy of "contextualism," a term coined by the students to describe Rowe's theory. Thomas Schumacher, one of Rowe's students, recently recollected:

In fact, the term originally used by Steven Hurtt and Stuart Cohen was *Contextualism*, a conflation of *Context* and *Texture*. We were interested in urban texture, what Italians call the *tessuto urbano* (more literally "Urban Fabric"), and urban form. We were not interested in style....our representative projects sought to reconcile modern urbanism with the traditional city...the inadequacies and problems of modern architecture are *urban*, not *stylistic*....It is possible to make good cities using modern architecture, as the Amsterdam School proved back in the 1930s.¹

This article is one of the first statements of the principles of Rowe's "collage city" approach, which Schumacher lays out prescriptively. One of the most important ideas is that both urban solids (building masses) and voids (the spaces of street and square) can be figural. The use of analytical figure/ground plan diagrams made clear the significance of the form of public spaces in creating the character of the city. European cities are characterized by well defined, figural public spaces including streets and squares, while American cities tend to have open, unbounded planes, like greens, malls, and commons.

A second important component of contextualist theory is the idea of the "differentiated building." Schumacher acknowledges a debt to Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* for the development of this notion; he refers no doubt to Venturi's statement that the building should

accommodate difficult conditions without concealing the accommodation. The "differentiated building" synthesizes ideal and circumstantial, deforming to the conditions of the site, and accommodating many pressures without losing its Gestalt "imageability."

Contextualism offers a middle-ground position between an unrealistically frozen past with no future development permitted, and urban renewal with the total loss of the urban fabric. Schumacher presents the traditional city's compositional strategy of gradual accretion as an alternative model to the massive bulldozing and new construction of the 1950s and 1960s. The collage city model has been extremely influential in American schools of architecture including the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, where Rowe was a Fellow from 1967 to 1969.

1 Thomas L. Schumacher, unpublished statement, May 1995.

THOMAS L. SCHUMACHER
CONTEXTUALISM: URBAN IDEALS
AND DEFORMATIONS¹

The time is ripe for construction, not foolery.
Le Corbusier, 1922

We can work it out.
The Beatles, 1966

If one momentarily puts aside most of our urban problems (overcrowding, transportation, economics, etc.), if one places himself in the unlikely position of abstracting a small aspect of reality, he can examine the shape of the modern city independent of its many functions. The twentieth-century town is physically a combination of two simple concepts: the traditional city of corridor streets, grids, squares, etc., and the city-in-the-park. The traditional city is primarily an experience of spaces defined by continuous walls of building which are arranged in a way that emphasizes the spaces and de-emphasizes the building volumes. It is an experience which can be thought of as resulting from a subtractive process in which spaces have been carved out of solid masses. By contrast, the city-in-the-park (a phenomenon most clearly articulated by Le Corbusier as the "Ville Radieuse"), is compositionally the reverse of the traditional city. Composed of isolated buildings set in a parklike landscape, the city-in-the-park presents an experience which emphasizes the building volumes and not the spaces which the buildings define or imply.

Although the division of urban form into two types is somewhat arbitrary, it approximates reality. Because the twentieth-century town is an unhappy combination of the traditional city and various misconceptions of the Ville Radieuse, contextualism has attempted to resolve this dilemma and made the city as we find it a viable form in a future which promises enormous expansion. Faced with the reality that orgies of construction at economically

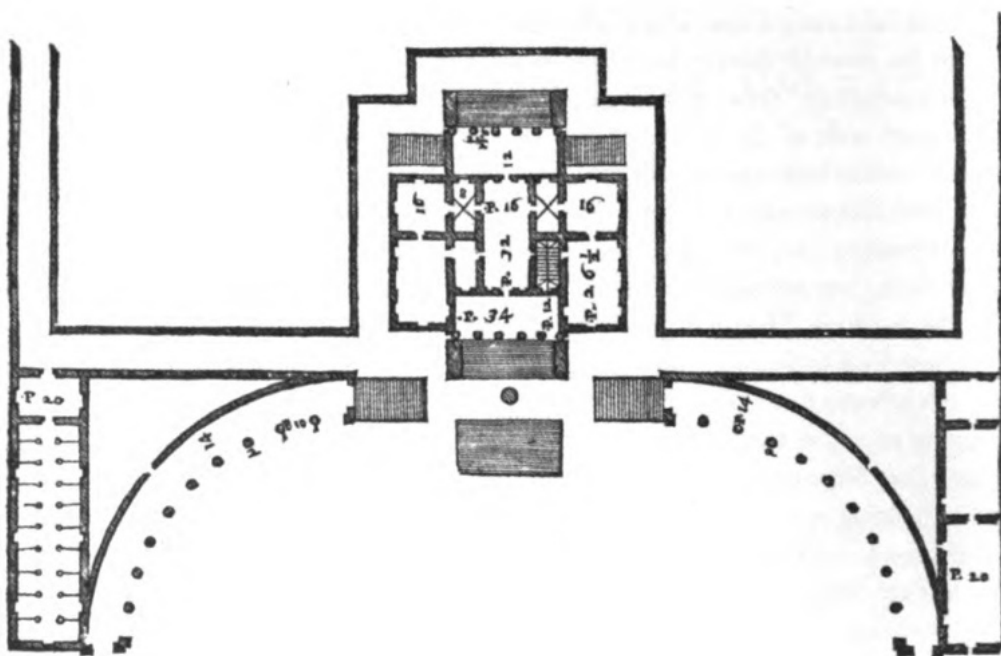
From *Casabella* no. 359-360 (1971): 79-86. Courtesy of the author and publisher.

ripe times have made a mess of our urban life, it seems imperative to stop and reflect.

So far, modern theories of urbanism and their applications have tended to devalue the traditional city.² Yet we have not broken our ties to it. We respect and enjoy the charm and human scale of the picturesque medieval town, while we destroy—in the name of progress—what little traditional urbanism we possess. The criterion of economic obsolescence overrides all others. If a building doesn't keep paying for itself, it goes. "Big ball" renewal projects have created a chasm between the existing and the new preventing either from offering any reasonable amenity.³ Modern architecture promised a utopia fashioned after the machine. The promise hasn't been kept. One could, at this point, understandably argue for a revisionist philosophy and a return to traditional city ideas. Yet this alone does not solve so many of our real problems. Land values and the economic necessities of grouping people in high concentrations have greatly limited the flexibility of the capitalist city. Economic pressures and design preferences, for example, have led to the typification of housing as packages which can be assembled only as the city-in-the-park, endlessly repetitious and based on profit rather than need. The results are urban configurations which relate neither to the human being nor to the neighborhood which they interrupt.

Obviously some middle ground is needed. To retreat to a hopelessly artificial past is unrealistic, but to allow a brutalizing system to dominate and destroy traditional urbanism is irresponsible. Contextualism, professing to be a reconciliation of the above ideas, has attempted such a middle ground. But before any specific discussion of these ideas can be made, it is necessary to state a few of the basic assumptions which have formed the groundrules for this approach to solving urban problems. Very briefly, the argument might be stated as follows: because form need not follow function, building programs and uses need not be expressed in the configuration of buildings and towns. This renders out-of-context comparisons feasible. Hence a church plan and a housing block can be rationally compared. The manipulation of forms at large scale relates directly to the organizational patterns of buildings. Such smaller scale works serve as analogue models for larger projects. Thus, urban form is seen as possessing a life of its own, irrespective of use, culture, and economic conditions. Formal continuities transcending periods therefore become an important consideration.⁴ Moreover, the communicative nature of architecture as a mimetic art is given new importance. This attitude depends upon the proposition that the modern-movement concept of utility and economy of means as expressed in functionalist theory is inadequate to cope with the complexities of modern experience, and that an "overplus" of communication is a necessary constituent of both buildings and cities.⁵ Thus, "...the various forms of architecture...are above all structures or representation; which means in actual terms that architecture, like every other art, is both reality and representation."⁶

The validity of these assumptions cannot be tested. While they do not appear to relate directly to the solution of so many of our urban problems, it can be argued that those problems cannot be solved by architecture (or urban design) as a medium of direct communication but more likely by a social and economic process of which architecture is only a part. One is not arguing against social relevance. One "is" arguing that after a certain point in the planning process other criteria surface which allow us to make judgments about the final form of our cities. And although it is just as easy to leave out this phase (indeed, today it is always left out), it is the application of such criteria (either consciously or unconsciously) which give many cities their particular ambiances.



Andrea Palladio, Villa Badoer.

A building is like a soap bubble. This bubble is perfect and harmonious if the breath has been evenly distributed from the inside. The exterior is the result of the interior.

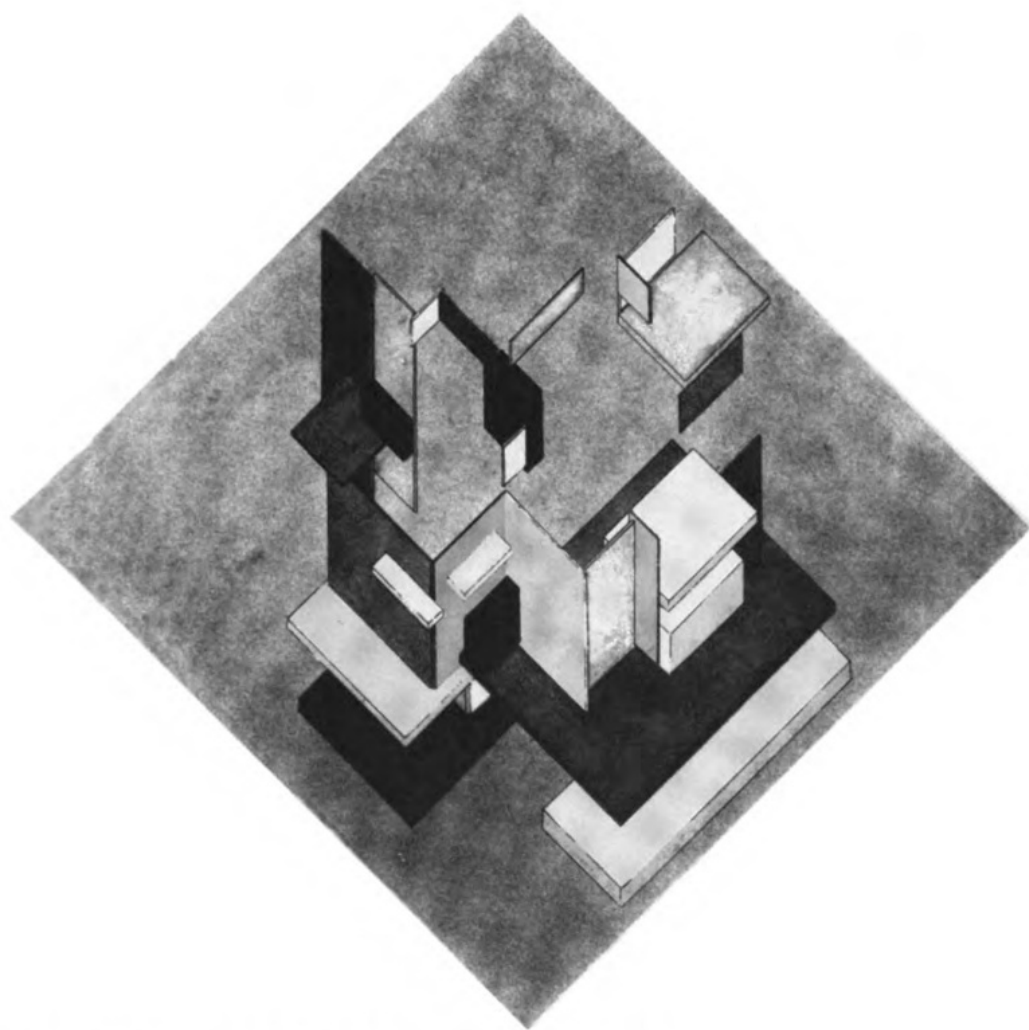
Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 1923

In contrast to frontalism, born out of a static conception of life, the new architecture will reach a great richness by developing an "all-sided plastic" way in space and time.

Theo van Doesburg, "24 Points of the New Architecture," 1924

The above statements typify an attitude toward architectural form which, while it gave modern architecture and urbanism some of its important peculiarities as a style, also created many of the problems we face today in the siting of buildings and the design of cities. The concept that a building should exist in the round, isolated from its neighbors, multi-sided and without preferential faces, is of course not new.⁷ What was new for modern architecture was the insistence that this type of configuration be typical for all building types rather than special to particularly important building uses.

The development of Renaissance architecture is generally described as the historical progression from the Loggia degli Innocenti of [Filippo] Brunelleschi to the Tempietto of Bramante. This progression is presented as the continuing refinement of motifs from inscribed forms to real forms—from surface to volume—culminating in a cylindrical temple capped by a dome. Independent of context, round and idealized (almost without function) this little pavilion represented an ideal scarcely attainable in buildings with only slightly more complicated programs and site conditions. Allusions to the perfection



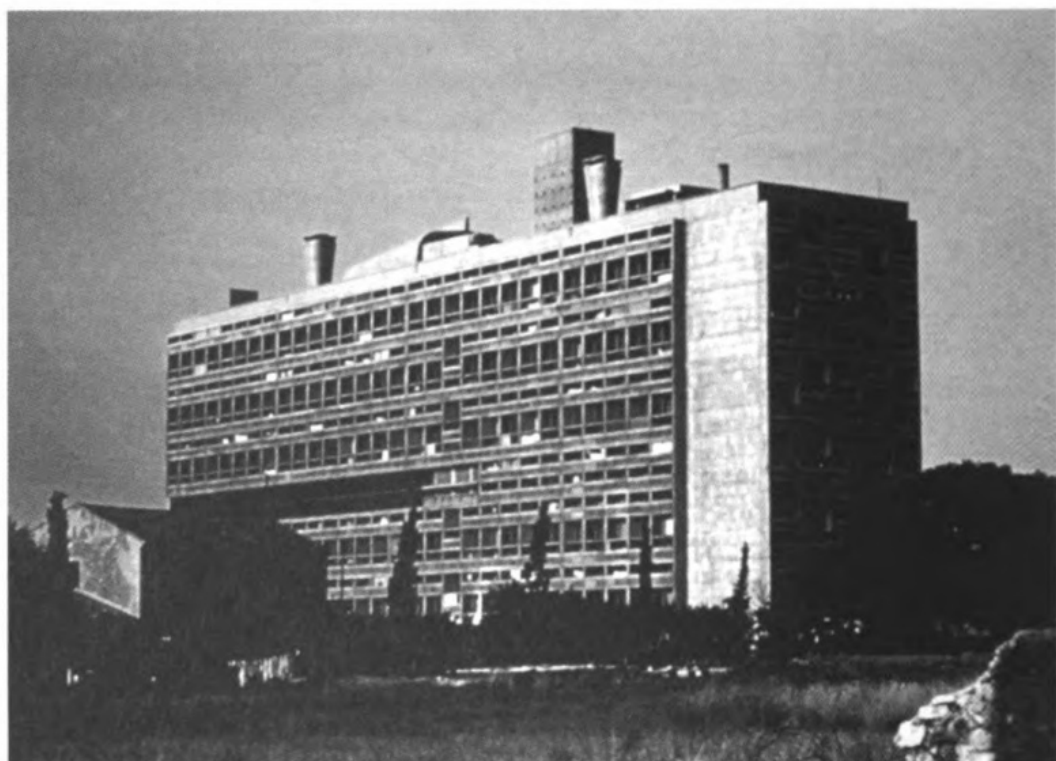
T. van Doesburg, C. van Eesteren, Project for a Private House.

of the Tempietto are common in buildings up to the twentieth century. Certainly Santa Maria della Consolazione in Todi approaches this condition. But in most cases architects have been required to soften the ideal and conform to both use and the situation.⁸ The Villa Badoer of Palladio is an example of the alterations made to an "ideal," multi-sided form in order to accommodate the attendant functions housed in the wings. This building still lacks the site restrictions which promote the elaborate formal disguises that urban buildings do often possess.

By comparison, [Theo] van Doesburg's and [Cornelis] van Eesteren's project for a private house, 1922, represents an intent similar to that of the Tempietto, and can be contrasted to the Villa Badoer. Van Doesburg's construction is a multi-sided figural building which is dependent upon separation from its context. But aside from being figural (like the Villa Badoer), it is also "non"-frontal. Lacking any plane of reference as face and thereby lacking flanks, this project approaches the state of idealization of the Tempietto. Like the Tempietto this project is a prototype. Such idealization of buildings has been a



Giorgio Vasari, Uffizi, Florence.



Le Corbusier, Unité d'Habitation, Marseille.

constant imperative of modern architecture either as a purely formal preference like the de Stijl prospects, or as representing a functional unit or a program, as in the Bauhaus projects and buildings. The image of the building as an object in the round is so much a part of the modern architect's vision that he is prone to see all ages of building in these "sculptural" terms. Hence the modern architect is often disappointed in the buildings he visits which do not reflect this pre-conception.

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 attitude 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'..."⁹

It is precisely the ways in which idealized forms can be adjusted to a context or used as "collage"¹⁰ that contextualism seeks to explain, and it is the systems of geometric organization which can be abstracted from any given context that contextualism seeks to divine as design tools.

To return to the question of the city as solids "in" voids and voids "in" solids, a comparison of the Uffizi in Florence and the Unité d'habitation in Marseilles, provides a useful analogy. The Unité is a rectangular prism, oblong and solid. The Uffizi is a rectangular prism, oblong and void. Both may be seen as "figures" surrounded by a "ground," and each represents a way of looking at the city. An archetypal void seen as a figure in plan is a conceptual ambiguity since figures are generally thought of as solid. Yet when a void has the properties of a figure it is endowed with certain capabilities which "ground" voids lack. While the Piazza Barberini in Rome, a "ground" void, functions well as a distributor of traffic but not as a collector of people, the Piazza Navona, a figural void, collects pedestrians easily.

In an unpublished masters thesis at Cornell University,¹¹ Wayne Copper has explored the nature of void as figure and solid as ground. "Once it is recognized that figure and ground are conceptually reversible, it follows quite naturally that their roles are interdependent." To consider a famous urban space without the back-up solid which provides its "ground" is to render an incomplete picture. Obviously the Piazza San Marco in Venice owes much of its vitality as a figural space and collector of people to the densely packed areas around it which feed it people and provide the contrast of solid to its void. When seen reversed in an all black and white drawing, the ambivalence of solid and void is obvious, and the tension created by the equality of the visual "weight" poses some interesting questions: does a regular space require irregular back-up solids? Can any norm of size relationships between streets and squares be abstracted from examining such spaces? But mainly, is this all simply irrelevant since building heights vary and the actual surfaces which define space "really" give urbanism its particular ambience? (The old idea that the Sistine Chapel is simply a barn without its painted-on architecture comes to mind here). Yet, as Copper argues, "...it would be absurd to attempt to analyze midtown Manhattan with only one level of plan...although with Rome, it would not." Obviously this abstraction does not provide the whole story, and for New York this is almost meaningless. As a tool of analysis, however, the figure-ground drawing does involve us immediately with the urban structure of a given context.

The abstraction of ideas via the concept of figure-ground and figure-ground reversal (or ambivalence) proceeds to the examination of ideal forms which have become "classic urbanism" as well as to the contexts into which these ideals are placed. The ideal city of the Renaissance, for example, begins as a medieval town containing a collection of idealized buildings and culminates as a geometric abstraction devised to accept all forms of individually idealized structures. Between the two is the reality of the Renaissance city, a medieval town which both deforms and is deformed by the Renaissance buildings it hosts. The "città ideale" of Peruzzi should be contrasted to the siting of the Palazzo Rucellai. The palace is in a narrow street where it is impossible to ever achieve a frontal view of the facade. While this is contrary to Renaissance intentions for the city, it is necessary to accept the condition and allow oneself the luxury of his perceptual ability to "lift" the building out of context.

In a constricted environment, the siting of culturally important buildings for which specific deformations are created is important to note. S. Agnese in Piazza Navona is perhaps the quintessential example. The basic parti is that of a centralized cross surmounted by a dome (not unlike S.M. della Consolazione), a basically figural building. The insistently flat facade of the Piazza implied the need for a building which adhered to the existing geometry, contrary to the ideal parti type. S. Agnese is both. The facade of the Piazza is maintained and at the same time is warped in such a way that its integrity is not broken while the dome is perceptually thrust forward into the prominence it requires as a symbol. The deformations of a particular building parti which maintain a reading of the building as an ideal form is not solely a function of the pressures exerted by a tight context. The differentiation of the faces of completely figural buildings is also of interest. Colin Rowe has stated that the absolute idealization of any useful building is logically impossible because, if no other pressures influence its design, at least entrance and orientation must act as deforming pressures.

The deforming pressures of an entry sequence may be seen in Le Corbusier's Pavillon Suisse which has been widely misconceived and emulated as a nonhierarchical, two-faced slab. It is in fact a two-sided slab, but it has a clearly defined front and back, which are treated as differently as possible within the limits of a flat surface. The entrance facade is prefaced by two curved surfaces, one rough and one smooth, that heighten the flatness of the block itself which is basically solid. The "garden" facade, by contrast, is a transparent flat curtain wall.

If the Pavillon Suisse is an example of a building "distorted" by a relatively loose context, an example of the opposite (an undistorted building within a tight context) is the CBS building of Eero Saarinen. Confined within the tight grid of New York City and placed at the end of a block, the CBS tower takes no account of the fact that its four facades face different conditions. The two streets, the wide avenue, and the adjacent buildings have in no way been recognized. Indeed, the site pressures have been so well camouflaged that the entrances to the building are almost impossible to find. The interaction of the idealized parti with its environment may be further seen in a small scale analogy, a detail in the Palazzo Farnese of Antonio da Sangallo the younger. In the entry sequence, the central aisle of a three-aisled entrance, is the width of the typical bays of the courtyard arcade. The side aisles, however, are narrower, thus leaving a discrepancy where they meet the courtyard. This is accommodated by a fan-like forced perspective

band at the inner courtyard facade. Here the two conflicting forms are brought together in a resolution that not only solves an otherwise awkward intersection, but also does not completely disguise the existence of the problem. It is a kind of "75% solution" to a compositional problem that, through its incompleteness, enriches the entire composition.

Although this example is not literally a microcosm of problems of urban form (particularly plan problems), the nature of the solution is analogous and contextualism attempts to create a milieu in which abstractions of this kind and great jumps in scale can be useful tools for breaking sets.

At a larger scale, the siting of the Palazzo Borghese and the adjustments made to it in order to accommodate a complex condition explain the urban implication of Sangallo's moves in the Palazzo Farnese. This sort of adjustment differs from that of S. Agnese in the way the configuration and building are more complicated and in the way more responses are made to site pressures. Here the archetypal renaissance cortile is embedded in an oddly shaped configuration. The geometric inconsistencies are resolved by the addition of new geometries which "collect" and absorb the odd directions.

The above examples, S. Agnese in the Piazza Navona and the Palazzo Borghese, represent configurations in which fragmentary responses are made to appear as part of the parti. A second type of urban configuration, where buildings are put together with elements which relate directly to the context and only haphazardly to the building itself, is seen in the complex of S. Giovanni in Laterano. Growing slowly over many centuries and responding to specific pressures, the Lateran complex (an urban "megastructure" of moderate scale) exhibits the characteristics of a collage. The principle facade relates to the portal of S. Giovanni, the benediction loggia relates to the Via Merulana (the Sixtus V axis from Santa Maria Maggiore), and the Palazzo Laterano relates to the Piazza S. Giovanni. All of the elements are tacked on to the body of the church which does "not" respond to their pressures but remains internally the archetypal basilica almost without deformation.

Similar to S. Giovanni in its local accommodation of context is the Cathedral of Florence. Here the concept of building as both figure and ground is exploited. The major facade serves as ground to the Baptistry which is totally figural and to the Piazza S. Giovanni. The rear of the Cathedral acts as a figure which intrudes into and activates the Piazza del Duomo. It is this sort of differentiated building which can respond to many pressures created by a context without losing its imageability as a Gestalt. This type of building is rare in modern architecture ([Alvar] Aalto's Pensions Institute in Helsinki is a noticeable exception, as are many of Le Corbusier's works). It is different from the typical picturesque modern building which "...separates function into interlocking wings or connected pavilions."¹²

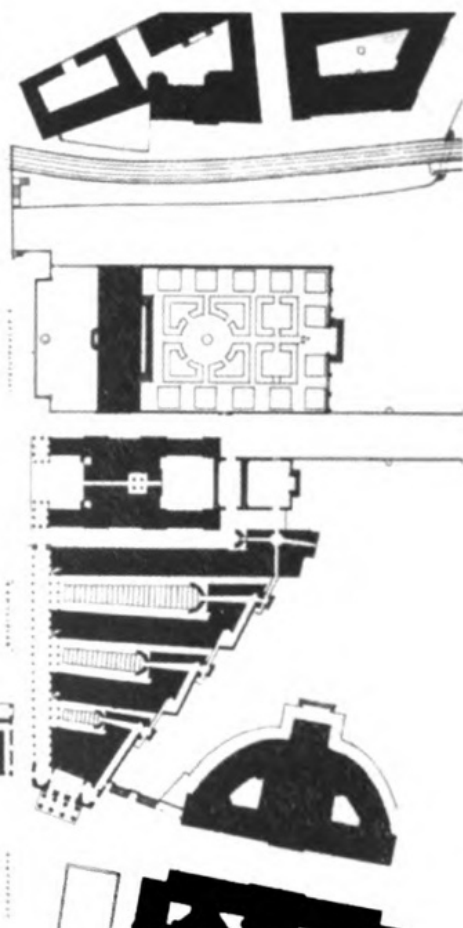
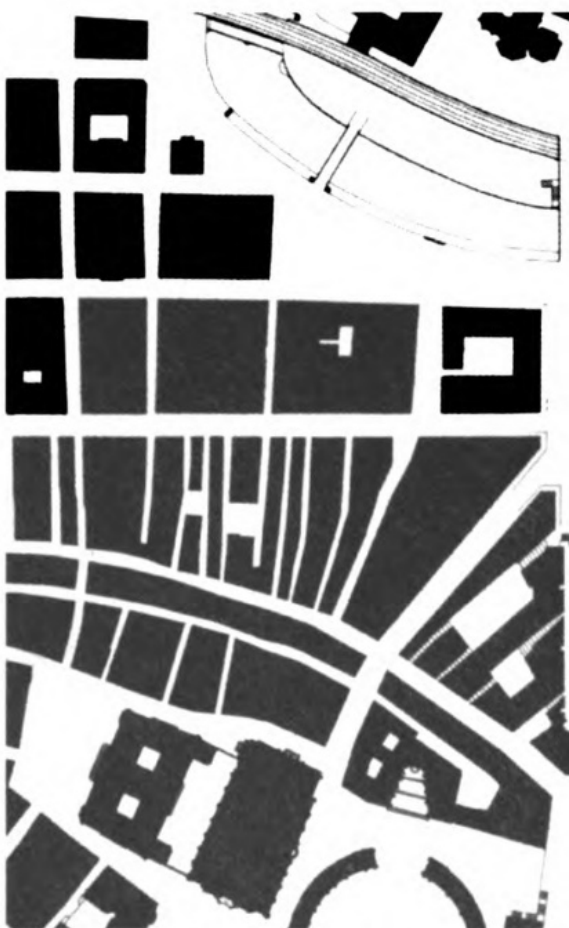
If we relate the urban pressures recognized in the aforementioned examples to the concept of idealization through programmatic requirements (i.e., if we deform Le Corbusier's soap bubble), we can arrive at a logically balanced "contextual" building. The office building type, although most often idealized as a point block, can assume any number of functioning shapes. A beautiful example of this flexibility is [Erik] Gunnar Asplund's 1922 competition for the Royal Chancellery in Stockholm. Produced at the same time that Le Corbusier was creating his "Ville Contemporaine," Asplund's project presented an opposite point of view. In the "Ville Contemporaine," the office building



Florence Cathedral. Wayne Copper, "The Figure-Grounds."



Stuttgart. Wayne Copper, "The Figure-Grounds."



Gunnar Asplund, Royal Chancellery, Stockholm. Wayne Copper, "The Figure-Grounds."

was idealized as a cruciform tower—a collection of concepts about a building type—presented in almost cartoon fashion. To Asplund, the specific symbolic impact of the building type was subordinate to the relationship of the building and site. The resulting parti ties the building inextricably to the context in a manner that tends to disguise the limits of the actual building lot. Here the relative symbolic importance of the complex in the town is accomplished locally, by the placement of the entrance portico of the major axis. This portico functions in a manner similar to the benediction loggia of S. Giovanni in Laterano. The chancellery configuration begins to imply a strategy of “progressive substitution” in which successive elements relate directly to the adjacent elements. Although the building complex responds to its site context, it is by no means a simple catalogue of site pressures. On the contrary, Asplund’s scheme is in the best tradition of Venturi’s idea of “Both-And.” It is both responsive and assertive, both figure and ground, both introverted and extroverted, and both idealized and deformed.

A further jump in scale leads to the study of “zones” and “fields”¹³ within particular city plans. When abstracted, these are obvious organizing devices for further development as well as conceptually prototypical schemes for buildings in deformations. The plans for Stuttgart and Munich exhibit the presence of zones generally related to certain periods of development. The figure-ground abstractions show how accident, important buildings, and major spaces tend to section the city into a series of phenomenally transparent fields, the organizations of which are not unlike those of a cubist painting. “Within cubist painting,” Copper asserts, “pictorial space has been shattered into an endless collage of overlapping elements rarely complete in themselves,” which “find their organization via reference to larger elements often superimposed over them...” In urban groupings, “...a field of objects would be seen as a unit when they are defined by some dissimilar means of organization, or when, via some idiosyncrasy of form, polarize themselves into a cogent grouping.”

As in cubist painting, when the organizational geometries do not reside in the objects themselves, the possibilities of combining various buildings within a system of order which attributes to each piece a bit of the organization become almost infinite. To limit the range of possibilities the use of the grid systems has been traditional. The interaction of grids and diagonals and curved systems has been explored in the Urban Design Department at Cornell University under the direction of Colin Rowe. In the plan for the Buffalo waterfront prepared by students under Professor Rowe’s guidance, the existing city grids of Buffalo have been exploited, and moves have been made to bring the grids into a condition of spatial overlap in order to facilitate movement and “sense of place.”¹⁴ The plan represents a careful use of cubist-like order and specific deformations of idealized buildings. The system works almost as a straight line process. Fields are identified through the abstraction of the town via figure-ground drawings. Those considered useful in terms of activity and location are reinforced and clarified. The areas of collision are brought into sharp focus as needing resolution. In this case the city hall area was taken as the focus of two major grid systems, one of which relates to the waterfront, and the other of which relates to the existing town. These are brought together through the use of overlapping zones and geometrically multi-functioning buildings.

A further development of this approach, but in a more rigid context, was the Cornell team’s Harlem plan, part of an exhibit sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art:

"New Cities, Architecture and Urban Renewal."¹⁵ The scheme dealt with the particularities of the Manhattan Grid. Virtually without hierarchy, the grid offers no inherent possibilities for specific important building sites or centers of activity. Nor are any particular intersections given real prominence over others. This has the opposite effect of that in a medieval town. Because all streets are the same, initial orientation changes and becomes disorientation. No sense of "place" occurs because no place is different from any other place. The medieval town is, of course, the reverse. Initially impossible to fathom, it ultimately offers total orientation with familiarity. In the case of Harlem, the uneven terrain and the diagonal of St. Nicholas Avenue provide the only resources for enlivening the grid. Furthermore, the intrusion of vast wastelands of housing, all rather poor examples of concepts abstracted from the Ville Radieuse, provided clues as to how to approach redevelopment of the area. From this viewpoint it appeared obvious that some attempt should be made to make the many housing projects appear as if they were designed to co-exist with each other and with the context. This was accomplished by either "springing loose" the projects into zones of predominate void and defining these zones with hard edges, or by "wrapping up" the projects in order to give them back a context. The areas of great activity, where important new spaces were created, adjusted themselves to the existing context via multi-functioning buildings. The complex of buildings on the major east-west axis of 125th Street adheres on one side to the blocks opposite and on the other side reacts almost violently to various pressures on its "garden" facade which front an immense plaza.

These schemes have assumed a level of abstraction which permits the idealization of buildings either as particular urban symbols or as building programs. There is, therefore, a reliance on certain modern architecture parti-types. Although in many instances at the Urban Design Studio at Cornell buildings have been given functions roughly relating to their form type, it should be emphasized that the primary intention has been to create a formal "shorthand" which explains site pressures to an imaginary project architect. Thus, when presented with a design problem against which to measure the pre-deformed shapes given as the urban design exercise, the individual architect is in possession of an input which shows him how to start making decisions. The process can function only if the designer is willing to recognize the ultimate flexibility of any program and its ability to imply any number of partis. The process is also aided by the designer's knowledge of parti-types for traditional building programs.

- 1 This approach to urban design is the result of collaboration of graduate students at Cornell University under the guidance of Colin Rowe, between 1963 and the present. Professor Rowe is responsible for many of the points made in this paper. The term "Contextualism" was first used by Stuart Cohen and Steven Hurtt in an unpublished masters thesis entitled "Le Corbusier: The Architecture of City Planning."
- 2 The assumption of the Modern Movement was that existing Western forms had to be completely replaced. Van Doesburg's *Europe is Lost* and Le Corbusier's *There Can be No New Architecture Without New City Planning* are but two examples among many.
- 3 See Robert A.M. Stern, *New Directions in American Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).
- 4 This approaches the theories of Julien Guadet. See Colin Rowe, "Review of Talbot Hamlin's *Forms and Functions of 20th-Century Architecture*," *Art Bulletin* (May 1953). Also see Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1959).

- 5 See Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Meaning in Architecture," in Charles Jencks and George Baird, eds., *Meaning in Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).
- 6 Luigi Moretti, "Form as Structure," *AA Journal Arena* (1967).
- 7 Alberti discusses the siting of temples separated from their surroundings, as does Palladio.
- 8 Sitte has shown how, in the nineteenth century, of 225 churches in Rome, only 6 were free-standing. Camillo Sitte, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, Collins, trans. (New York: Random House, 1965), 26.
- 9 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 22.
- 10 Literal urban collage is probably a semantic impossibility, except in an instance like the placing of a Claes Oldenburg lipstick in an urban landscape. For my purposes here, collage is taken to mean the placement of formally disparate elements in a given context.
- 11 Wayne Copper, *The Figure-Grounds* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- 12 Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, op. cit., 38.
- 13 See Cohen and Hurtt, "Le Corbusier," op. cit., 22.
- 14 Buffalo Waterfront Project: Colin Rowe, Werner Seligmann, Jerry Alan Wells, critics; Richard Baiter, Richard H. Cardwell, David W. K. Chan, Wayne Copper, Harris N. Forusz, Alfred H. Koetter, Makoto Miki, Elpidio F. Olimpio, Franz G. Oswald, student collaborators.
- 15 *The New City: Architecture and Urban Renewal* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967).

INTRODUCTION

A Significance for A&P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown

In this essay, incorporated into the book *Learning from Las Vegas* (written with Steven Izenour, 1972), Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown argue that architects should simply "enhance" what exists in the environment, instead of assuming (in elitist, modernist fashion) that everything there is bad. As an extension of the provocative critique of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* to the urban realm, the article proposes a "revolutionary" approach for architects. The authors expect that this more modest and tolerant approach will be difficult for high-brow architects trained to embrace Daniel Burnham's dictum: "Make no small plans."

In arguing for inclusion of the commercial highway "strip" as valid American urbanism, the architects assert that the Las Vegas strip is analogous to the Roman piazza. This analogy is intentionally inflammatory since the piazza is a cherished paradigm of enclosed urban space, and Venturi and Scott Brown admit that the image of the strip is open and chaotic. Similarly provocative is their comparison of the ubiquitous A&P grocery store parking lot to the formal landscape architecture of Versailles. The authors describe the parking lot as part of the "current phase in the evolution of vast space," thereby reducing sophisticated French gardens to residual open space.

Humor aside, the outrageousness of these analogies and statements, which appear not to recognize qualitative differences, is part of their rhetorical strategy to force a reconsideration of aspects of the architectural discipline they deem to be marginalized or underrated. While they appear to use logical argument brilliantly, their conclusions cast doubt on the process: the results caricature logic and legitimate discourse, and leave responsible architects wondering how to use their "contribution."

It is troubling but revealing of their intentions that Venturi and Scott Brown issue a disclaimer about the content of their polemic: "Las Vegas is analyzed here only as a phenomenon of architectural communication; its values are not questioned." The medium of communication interests them (more than the implications of the message) as part of the larger postmodern issue of meaning. Thus, the semiotic role of advertising signs in the landscape receives attention and is aggrandized to become the architecture. (See semiotics, ch. 2) They claim that "If you take the signs away there is no place," challenging phenomenologists

earnest insistence on *place-making* as the architect's contribution to dwelling. (See Norberg-Schulz, ch. 9; Gregotti, ch. 7; Frampton, ch. 11) Thus for Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, buildings and their spatial qualities are inconsequential, except insofar as they provide a wall that can be used as a billboard. This idea develops into their preference for the "decorated shed" (a dumb box with applied symbolism), over the "duck," (an expressionist, functionalist form), proclaimed in another collaborative article a few months later. The iconographic power of this opposition and its succinct terms have made it one of the memorable, if controversial, images of recent theory.

The VSBA office investigated the communicative possibilities of the wall surface in some of their architectural projects, including the infamous "billding board" Football Hall of Fame. As is often the case with projects that operate at the limits of the discipline, these remain unbuilt. But this does not diminish their impact as ironic provocations.

Emphasizing that their essay is only "a study on method," the authors disseminated their analysis technique in a design studio at Yale, taught with Izenour in 1968. In their avoidance of a critical position, the authors can be seen as apologists for the proliferation of the strip in America. This depressing, unecological condition of sprawl gained legitimacy through the indulgent, even approving, attitude expressed by these influential theorists and educators. Understandably, VSBA has been criticized for the opinions represented in their essay and book. James Howard Kunstler's *Geography of Nowhere* (1993) takes an angry look at the ubiquity of the strip phenomenon and its sociocultural impact on American towns from the perspective of a journalist and citizen. Other architects have vehemently opposed VSBA's theoretical direction as cynical and condescending, including Demetri Porphyrios and Kenneth Frampton. Objections like the following permeate Frampton's writings on the postmodern period:

The rhetoric [of *Learning from Las Vegas*]...is ideology in its purest form....Venturi and Scott Brown [ambivalently] exploit this ideology as a way of bringing us to condone the ruthless kitsch of Las Vegas.¹

Frampton's published debate with Venturi and Scott Brown is legendary. On the other hand, one might detect sympathy toward their position in Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, who makes a similar plea for appreciation of "edge cities" in this chapter.

1 Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 291.

ROBERT VENTURI AND DENISE SCOTT BROWN
A SIGNIFICANCE FOR A&P
PARKING LOTS OR LEARNING FROM
LAS VEGAS

Substance for a writer consists not merely of those realities he thinks he discovers; it consists even more of those realities which have been made available to him by the literature and idioms of his own day and by the images that still have vitality in the literature of the past.

Stylistically, a writer can express his feeling about this substance either by imitation, if it sits well with him, or by parody, if it doesn't.

Richard Poirier¹

Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect. Not the obvious way, which is to tear down Paris and begin again, as Le Corbusier suggested in the 1920s, but another way which is more tolerant: that is to question how we look at things.

The Commercial Strip, the Las Vegas Strip in particular—it is the example par excellence—challenges the architect to take a positive, non-chip-on-the-shoulder view. Architects are out of the habit of looking nonjudgmentally at the environment because orthodox Modern architecture is progressive, if not revolutionary, utopian and puristic; it is dissatisfied with *existing* conditions. Modern architecture has been anything but permissive: architects have preferred to change the existing environment rather than enhance what is there.

But to gain insight from the commonplace is nothing new: fine art often follows folk art. Romantic architects of the eighteenth century discovered an existing and conventional rustic architecture. Early Modern architects appropriated an existing and

From *Architectural Forum* 128, no. 2 (March 1968): 36–43, 91. Reprinted in *Lotus International* 5 (1968): 70–91. Courtesy of the authors and the publisher.

conventional industrial vocabulary without much adaptation. Le Corbusier loved grain elevators and steam ships; the Bauhaus looked like a factory; Mies refined the details of American steel factories for concrete buildings. Modern architects work through analogy, symbol, and image—although they have gone to lengths to disclaim almost all determinants of their forms except structural necessity and the program—and they derive insights, analogies, and stimulation from unexpected images. There is a perversity in the learning process: we look backward at history and tradition to go forward; we can also look downward to go upward.

Architects who can accept the lessons of primitive vernacular architecture, so easy to take in an exhibit like "Architecture Without Architects," and of industrial, vernacular architecture, so easy to adapt to an electronic and space vernacular as elaborate neo-Brutalist or neo-Constructivist megastructures, do not easily acknowledge the validity of the commercial vernacular. Creating the new for the artist may mean choosing the old or the existing. Pop artists have relearned this. Our acknowledging existing, commercial architecture at the scale of the highway is within this tradition.

Modern architecture has not so much excluded the commercial vernacular as it has tried to take it over by inventing and enforcing a vernacular of its own, improved and universal. It has rejected the combination of fine art and crude art. The Italian landscape has always harmonized the vulgar and the Vitruvian: the *contorni* around the *duomo*, the *potiere's* laundry across the *padrone's portone*, Supercortemaggiore against the Romanesque apse. Naked children have never played in *our* fountains and I. M. Pei will never be happy on Route 66.

ARCHITECTURE AS SPACE

Architects have been bewitched by a single element of the Italian landscape: the piazza. Its traditional, pedestrian-scaled, and intricately enclosed space is easier to take than the spatial sprawl of Route 66 and Los Angeles. Architects have been brought up on Space, and enclosed space is the easiest to handle. During the last forty years, theorists of Modern architecture ([Frank Lloyd] Wright and Le Corbusier sometimes excepted) have focused on space as the essential ingredient which separates architecture from painting, sculpture, and literature. Their definitions glory in the uniqueness of the medium, and although sculpture and painting may sometimes be allowed spatial characteristics, sculptural or pictorial architecture is unacceptable. That is because space is sacred.

Purist architecture was partly a reaction against nineteenth-century eclecticism. Gothic churches, Renaissance banks, and Jacobean manors were frankly picturesque. The mixing of styles meant the mixing of media. Dressed in historical styles, buildings evoked explicit associations and Romantic allusions to the past to convey literary, ecclesiastical, national, or programmatic symbolism. Definitions of architecture as space and form at the service of program and structure were not enough. The overlapping of disciplines may have diluted the architecture, but it enriched the meaning.

Modern architects abandoned a tradition of iconology in which painting, sculpture, and graphics were combined with architecture. The delicate hieroglyphics on a bold pylon, the archetypal inscriptions on a Roman architrave, the mosaic processions in Sant' Apollinare, the ubiquitous tattoos over a Giotto chapel, the enshrined hierarchies around a Gothic portal, even the illusionistic frescoes in a Venetian villa all contain

messages beyond their ornamental contribution to architectural space. The integration of the arts in Modern architecture has always been called a good thing. But one didn't paint *on* Mies. Painted panels were floated independently of the structure by means of shadow joints; sculpture was in or near but seldom on the building. Objects of art were used to reinforce architectural space at the expense of their own content. The Kolbe in the Barcelona Pavilion was a foil to the directed spaces: the message was mainly architectural. The diminutive signs in most modern buildings contained only the most necessary messages, like "Ladies," minor accents begrudgingly applied.

ARCHITECTURE AS SYMBOL

Critics and historians who documented the "decline of popular symbols" in art, supported orthodox Modern architects who shunned symbolism of form as an expression or reinforcement of content: meaning was to be communicated through the inherent, physiognomic characteristics of form. The creation of architectural form was to be a logical process, free from images of past experience, determined solely by program and structure, with an occasional assist, as Alan Colquhoun has suggested,² from intuition.

But some recent critics have questioned the possible level of content to be derived from abstract forms. And others have demonstrated that the functionalists despite their protestations, derived a formal vocabulary of their own, mainly from current art movements and the industrial vernacular; latter-day followers like the Archigram group have turned, while similarly protesting, to Pop Art and the space industry. Indeed, not only are we

not free from the forms of the past, and from the availability of these forms as typological models, but...if we assume we are free, we have lost control over a very active sector of our imagination, and of our power to communicate with others.³

However, most critics have slighted a continuing iconology in popular commercial art: the persuasive heraldry which pervades our environment from the advertising pages of the *New Yorker* to the super-billboards of Houston. And their theory of the "debasement" of symbolic architecture in nineteenth-century eclecticism has blinded them to the value of the representational architecture along highways. Those who acknowledge this roadside eclecticism denigrate it because it flaunts the cliché of a decade ago as well as the style of a century ago. But why not? Time travels fast today.

The Miami-Beach Modern motel on a bleak stretch of highway in southern Delaware reminds the jaded driver of the welcome luxury of a tropical resort, persuading him, perhaps, to forgo the gracious plantation across the Virginia border called Motel Monticello. The real hotel in Miami alludes to the international stylishness of a Brazilian resort, which, in turn, derives from the International Style of middle Corbu. This evolution from the high source through the middle source to the low source took only thirty years. Today, the middle source, the neo-Eclectic architecture of the 1940s and 1950s is less interesting than its commercial adaptations. Roadside copies of Ed Stone are more interesting than the real Ed Stone.

The sign for the Motel Monticello, a silhouette of an enormous Chippendale highboy, is visible on the highway before the motel itself. This architecture of styles and signs is antispatal; it is an architecture of communication over space; communication

dominates space as an element in the architecture and in the landscape. But it is for a new scale of landscape. The philosophical associations of the old eclecticism evoked subtle and complex meanings to be savored in the docile spaces of a traditional landscape. The commercial persuasion of roadside eclecticism provokes bold impact in the vast and complex setting of a new landscape of big spaces, high speeds, and complex programs. Styles and signs make connections among many elements, far apart and seen fast. The message is basely commercial, the context is basically new.

A driver thirty years ago could maintain a sense of orientation in space. At the simple crossroad a little sign with an arrow confirmed what he already knew. He knew where he was. Today the crossroad is a cloverleaf. To turn left he must turn right, a contradiction poignantly evoked in the print by Allan D'Arcangelo. But the driver has no time to ponder paradoxical subtleties within a dangerous, sinuous maze. He relies on signs to guide him—enormous signs in vast spaces at high speeds.

The dominance of signs over space at a pedestrian scale occurs in big airports. Circulation in a big railroad station required little more than a simple axial system from taxi to train, by ticket window, stores, waiting room, and platform, virtually without signs. Architects object to signs in buildings: "if the plan is clear you can see where to go." But complex programs and settings require complex combinations of media beyond the purer architectural triad of structure, form, and light at the service of space. They suggest an architecture of bold communication rather than one of subtle expression.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF PERSUASION

The cloverleaf and airport communicate with moving crowds in cars or on foot, for efficiency and safety. But words and symbols may be used in space for commercial persuasion. The Middle Eastern bazaar contains no signs, the strip is virtually all signs. In the bazaar, communication works through proximity. Along its narrow aisles buyers feel and smell the merchandise, and explicit oral persuasion is applied by the merchant. In the narrow streets of the medieval town, although signs occur, persuasion is mainly through the sight and smell of the real cakes through the doors and windows of the bakery. On Main Street, shop-window displays for pedestrians along the sidewalks, and exterior signs, perpendicular to the street for motorists, dominate the scene almost equally.

On the commercial strip the supermarket windows contain no merchandise. There may be signs announcing the day's bargains, but they are to be read by the pedestrians approaching from the parking lot. The building itself is set back from the highway and half hidden, as is most of the urban environment, by parked cars. The vast parking lot is in front, not at the rear, since it is a symbol as well as a convenience. The building is low because air conditioning demands low spaces, and merchandising techniques discourage second floors; its architecture is neutral because it can hardly be seen from the road. Both merchandise and architecture are disconnected from the road. The big sign leaps to connect the driver to the store, and down the road the cake mixes and detergents are advertised by their national manufacturers on enormous billboards inflected toward the highway. The graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape. Inside, the A&P has reverted to the bazaar except that graphic packaging has replaced the oral persuasion of the merchant. At another scale, the shopping center off the highway returns in its pedestrian mall to the medieval street.

HISTORICAL TRADITION AND THE A&P

The A&P parking lot is a current phase in the evolution of vast space since Versailles. The space which divides high-speed highway and low, sparse buildings produces no enclosure and little direction. To move through a piazza is to move between high enclosing forms. To move through this landscape is to move over vast expansive texture: the megatexture of the commercial landscape. The parking lot is the parterre of the asphalt landscape. The patterns of parking lines give direction much as the paving patterns, curbs, borders, and *tapis verts* give direction in Versailles; grids of lamp posts substitute for obelisks and rows of urns and statues, as points of identity and continuity in the vast space. But it is the highway signs through their sculptural forms or pictorial silhouettes, their particular positions in space, their inflected shapes, and their graphic meanings which identify and unify the megatexture. They make verbal and symbolic connections through space, communicating a complexity of meanings through hundreds of associations in few seconds from far away. Symbol dominates space. Architecture is not enough. Because the spatial relationships are made by symbols more than by forms, architecture in this landscape becomes symbol in space rather than form in space. Architecture defines very little: the big sign and the little building is the rule of Route 66.

The sign is more important than the architecture. This is reflected in the proprietor's budget: the sign at the front is a vulgar extravaganza, the building at the back, a modest necessity. The architecture is what's cheap. Sometimes the building *is* the sign: the restaurant in the shape of a hamburger is sculptural symbol and architectural shelter. Contradiction between outside and inside was common in architecture before the Modern Movement, particularly in urban and monumental architecture. Baroque domes were symbols as well as spatial constructions, and they were bigger in scale and higher outside than inside in order to dominate their urban setting and communicate their symbolic message. The false fronts of western stores did the same thing. They were bigger and taller than the interiors they fronted to communicate the store's importance and to enhance the quality and unity of the street. But false fronts are of the order and scale of Main Street. From the desert town on the highway in the West of today we can learn new and vivid lessons about an impure architecture of communication. The little low buildings, grey brown like the desert, separate and recede from the street which is now the highway, their false fronts disengaged and turned perpendicular to the highway as big high signs. If you take the signs away there is no place. The desert town is intensified communication along the highway.

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, which tend to focus and clarify their images. Each city vividly superimposes elements of a supranational scale on the



View of the Las Vegas Strip, c.1968. Photograph by Denise Scott Brown.

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 which are ornamental and monumental and open to the promenading public are, a few old banks and railroad stations excepted, 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. Private building is shown in gray hatching which 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. Such a map for Las Vegas would reveal and clarify the public and the private at another scale, although the iconology of the signs in space would require other graphic methods.

A conventional map of Las Vegas reveals two scales of movement within the grid-iron plan: that of Main Street and that of the Strip. The main street of Las Vegas is Fremont Street, and the earlier of two concentrations of casinos is located along three or four blocks of this street. The casinos here are bazaar-like in the immediacy of their

clicking and tinkling gambling machines to the sidewalk. The Fremont Street casinos and hotels focus on the railroad depot at the head of the street; here the railroad and main street scales of movement connect. The bus depot is now the busier entrance to town, but the axial focus on the rail depot from Fremont Street is visual, and possibly symbolic. This contrasts with the Strip, where a second and later development of casinos extends southward to the airport, the jet-scale entrance to town.

One's first introduction to Las Vegas architecture is a replica of Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal, which is the local airport building. Beyond this piece of architectural image, impressions are scaled to the car rented at the airport. Here is the unraveling of the famous Strip itself, which, as Route 91, connects the airport with the downtown.

SYSTEM AND ORDER ON THE STRIP

The image of the commercial strip is chaos. The order in this landscape is not obvious. The continuous highway itself and its systems for turning are absolutely consistent. The median strip accommodates the U-turns necessary to a vehicular promenade for casino-crawlers, as well as left turns onto the local street pattern which the Strip intersects. The curbing allows frequent right turns for casinos and other commercial enterprises and eases the difficult transitions from highway to parking. The street lights function superfluously along many parts of the Strip which are incidentally but abundantly lit by signs; but their consistency of form and position and their arching shapes begin to identify by day a continuous space of the highway, and the constant rhythm contrasts effectively with the uneven rhythms of the signs behind.

This counterpoint reinforces the contrast between two types of order on the Strip: the obvious visual order of street elements and the difficult visual order of buildings and signs. The zone *of* the highway is a shared order. The zone *off* the highway is an individual order. The elements of the highway are civic. The buildings and signs are private. In combination they embrace continuity *and* discontinuity, going *and* stopping, clarity *and* ambiguity, cooperation *and* competition, the community *and* rugged individualism. The system of the highway gives order to the sensitive functions of exit and entrance, as well as to the image of the Strip as a sequential whole. It also generates places for individual enterprises to grow, and controls the general direction of that growth. It allows variety and change along its sides, and accommodates the contrapuntal, competitive order of the individual enterprises.

There is an order along the sides of the highway. Varieties of activities are juxtaposed on the Strip: service stations, minor motels, and multimillion dollar casinos. Marriage chapels ("credit cards accepted") converted from bungalows with added neon-lined steeples are apt to appear anywhere toward the downtown end. Immediate proximity of related uses, as on Main Street where you walk from one store to another, is not required along the Strip since interaction is by car and highway. You *drive* from one casino to another even when they are adjacent because of the distance between them, and an intervening service station is not disagreeable.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE STRIP

A typical casino complex contains a building which is near enough to the highway to be seen from the road across the parked cars, yet far enough back to accommodate

driveways, turnarounds, and parking. The parking in front is a token: it reassures the customer but does not obscure the building. It is prestige parking: the customer pays. The bulk of the parking, along the sides of the complex, allows direct access to the hotel, yet stays visible from the highway. Parking is never at the back. The scales of movement and space of the highway determine distances between buildings: they must be far apart to be comprehended at high speeds. Front footage on the Strip has not yet reached the value it once had on main street and parking is still an appropriate filler. Big space between buildings is characteristic of the Strip. It is significant that Fremont Street is more photogenic than the Strip. A single post card can carry a view of the Golden Horseshoe, the Mint Hotel, the Golden Nugget, and the Lucky Casino. A shot of the Strip is less spectacular; its enormous spaces must be seen as moving sequences.

The side elevation of the complex is important because it is seen by approaching traffic from a greater distance and for a longer time than the facade. The rhythmic gables on the long, low, English medieval style, half-timbered motel sides of the Aladdin Casino read emphatically across the parking space and through the signs and the giant statue of the neighboring Texaco station, and contrast with the modern Near-Eastern flavor of the casino front. Casino fronts on the Strip often inflect in shape and ornament toward the right, to welcome right-lane traffic. Modern styles use a porte-cochère which is diagonal in plan. Brazilianoid International styles use free forms. Service stations, motels, and other simpler types of buildings conform in general to this system of inflection toward the highway through the position and form of their elements. Regardless of the front, the back of the building is styleless because the whole is turned toward the front and no one sees the back.

Beyond the town, the only transition between the Strip and the Mojave Desert is a zone of rusting beer cans. Within the town the transition is as ruthlessly sudden. Casinos whose fronts relate so sensitively to the highway, turn their ill-kept backsides toward the local environment, exposing the residual forms and spaces of mechanical equipment and service areas.

Signs inflect toward the highway even more than buildings. The big sign— independent of the building and more or less sculptural or pictorial—inflects by its position, perpendicular to and at the edge of the highway, by its scale and sometimes by its shape. The sign of the Aladdin Casino seems to bow toward the highway through the inflection in its shape. It also is three dimensional and parts of it revolve. The sign at the Dunes is more chaste: it is only two-dimensional and its back echoes its front, but it is an erection twenty-two stories high which pulsates at night. The sign for the Mint Casino on Route 91 at Fremont Street inflects towards the Casino several blocks away. Signs in Las Vegas use mixed media—then words, pictures, and sculpture—to persuade and inform. The same sign works as polychrome sculpture in the sun and as black silhouette against the sun; at night it is a source of light. It revolves by day and moves by the play of light at night. It contains scales for close up and for distance. Las Vegas has the longest sign in the world, the Thunderbird, and the highest, the Dunes. Some signs are hardly distinguishable at a distance from the occasional highrise hotels along the Strip. The sign of the Pioneer Club on Fremont Street talks. Its cowboy, sixty feet high, says "Howdy Pardner" every thirty seconds. The big sign at the Aladdin has spawned a little sign with similar proportions to mark the entrance to the parking. "But such signs!" says Tom Wolfe. They

soar in shapes before which the existing vocabulary of art history is helpless. I can only attempt to supply names—Boomerang Modern, Palette Curvilinear, Flash Gordon Ming-Alert Spiral, McDonald's Hamburger Parabola, Mint Casino Elliptical, Miami Beach Kidney.⁴

Buildings are also signs. At night on Fremont Street whole buildings are illuminated, but not through reflection from spotlights; they are made into sources of light by closely-spaced neon tubes.

LAS VEGAS STYLES

The Las Vegas casino is a combination form. The complex program of Caesar's Palace—it is the newest—includes gambling, dining, and banqueting rooms, night clubs and auditoria, stores, and a complete hotel. It is also a combination of styles. The front colonnade is San Pietro Bernini in plan, but Yamasaki in vocabulary and scale; the blue and gold mosaic work is Early Christian, tomb of Galla Placidia. (Naturally the Baroque symmetry of its prototype precludes an inflection toward the right in this facade.) Beyond and above is a slab in Gio Ponti, Pirelli-Baroque, and beyond that, in turn, a lowrise in neo-Classical Motel Moderne. Each of these styles is integrated by a ubiquity of Ed Stone screens. The landscaping is also eclectic. Within the Piazza San Pietro is the token parking lot. Among the parked cars rise five fountains rather than the two of Carlo Maderno. Villa d'Este cypresses further punctuate the parking environment. Gian da Bologna's Rape of the Sabine Women, and various statues of Venus and David, with slight anatomical exaggerations, grace the area around the porte-cochère. Almost bisecting a Venus is an Avis: a sign identifying No. 2's office on the premises.

The agglomeration of Caesar's Palace and of the Strip as a whole approach the spirit if not the style of the late Roman Forum with its eclectic accumulations. But the sign of Caesar's Palace with its Classical, plastic columns is more Etruscan in feeling than Roman. Although not so high as the Dunes sign next door or the Shell sign on the other side, its base is enriched by Roman Centurians, lacquered like Oldenburg hamburgers, who peer over the acres of cars and across their desert empire to the mountains beyond. Their statuesque escorts, carrying trays of fruit, suggest the festivities within, and are a background for the family snapshots of Middle Westerners. A massive Miesian light-box announces square, expensive entertainers like Jack Benny in 1930s-style marquis lettering appropriate for Benny, if not for the Roman architrave it almost ornaments. The light-box is not in the architrave; it is located off-center on the columns in order to inflect toward the highway.

THE INTERIOR OASIS

If the back of the casino is different from the front for the sake of visual impact in the autoscope, the inside contrasts with the outside for other reasons. The interior sequence from the front door back, progresses from gambling areas to dining, entertainment, and shopping areas to hotel. Those who park at the side and enter there can interrupt the sequence, but the circulation of the whole focuses on the gambling rooms. In a Las Vegas Hotel the registration desk is invariably behind you when you enter the lobby; before you are the gambling tables and machines. The lobby is the gambling room.

The interior space and the patio, in their exaggerated separation from the environment, have the quality of an oasis.

LAS VEGAS LIGHTING

The gambling room is always very dark; the patio, always very bright. But both are enclosed: the former has no windows, the latter is open only to the sky. The combination of darkness and enclosure of the gambling room and its subspaces makes for privacy, protection, concentration, and control. The intricate maze under the low ceiling never connects with outside light or outside space. This disorients the occupant in space and time. He loses track of where he is and when it is. Time is limitless because the light of noon and midnight are exactly the same. Space is limitless because the artificial light obscures rather than defines its boundaries. Light is not used to define space. Walls and ceilings do not serve as reflective surfaces for light, but are made absorbent and dark. Space is enclosed but limitless because its edges are dark. Light sources, chandeliers, and the glowing, juke-box-like gambling machines themselves, are independent of walls and ceilings. The lighting is antiarchitectural. Illuminated baldachini, more than in all Rome, hover over tables in the limitless shadowy restaurant at the Sahara Hotel.

The artificially lit, air conditioned interiors complement the glare and heat of the agoraphobic auto-scaled desert. But the interior of the motel patio behind the casino is literally the oasis in a hostile environment. Whether Organic Modern or neo-Classical Baroque, it contains the fundamental elements of the classic oasis: courts, water, greenery, intimate scale, and enclosed space. Here they are a swimming pool, palms, grass, and other horticultural importations set in a paved court surrounded by hotel suites balconied or terraced on the court side for privacy. What gives poignancy to the beach umbrellas and chaises lounges is the vivid, recent memory of the hostile cars poised in the asphalt desert beyond. The pedestrian oasis in the Las Vegas desert is the princely enclosure of the Alhambra, and it is the apotheosis of all the motel courts with swimming pools more symbolic than useful, the plain, low restaurants with exotic interiors, and the shopping malls of the American strip.

THE BIG, LOW SPACE

The casino in Las Vegas is big, low space. It is the archetype for all public interior spaces whose heights are diminished for reasons of budget and air conditioning. (The low, one-way mirrored ceilings also permit outside observation of the gambling rooms.) In the past, volume was governed by structural spans: height was relatively easy to achieve. For us, span is easy to achieve, and volume is governed by mechanical and economic limitations on height. But railroad stations, restaurants, and shopping arcades only ten feet high reflect as well a changing attitude to monumentality in our environment. In the past, big spans with their concomitant heights were an ingredient of architectural monumentality. But our monuments are not the occasional tour de force of an Astrodome, a Lincoln Center, or a subsidized airport. These merely prove that big, high spaces do not automatically make architectural monumentality. We have replaced the monumental space of Pennsylvania Station by a subway aboveground, and that of Grand Central Terminal remains mainly through its magnificent conversion to an advertising vehicle. Thus, we rarely achieve architectural monumentality when we try; our money and skill

do not go into the traditional monumentality which expressed cohesion of the community through big scale, united, symbolic, architectural elements. Perhaps we should admit that our cathedrals are the chapels without the nave; that apart from theaters and ball parks the occasional communal space which is big is a space for crowds of anonymous individuals without explicit connection with each other. The big, low mazes of the dark restaurant with alcoves combine being together and yet separate as does the Las Vegas casino. The lighting in the casino achieves a new monumentality for the low space. The controlled sources of artificial and colored light within the dark enclosures, by obscuring its physical limits, expand and unify the space. You are no longer in the bounded piazza but in the twinkling lights of the city at night.

INCLUSION AND THE DIFFICULT ORDER

Henri Bergson called disorder all order we cannot see. The emerging order of the Strip is a complex order. It is not the easy, rigid order of the Urban Renewal project or the fashionable megastructure—the medieval hilltown with technological trappings. It is, on the contrary, a manifestation of an opposite direction in architectural theory: Broadacre City—a travesty of Broadacre City perhaps, but a kind of vindication of Frank Lloyd Wright's predictions for commercial strip within the urban sprawl is, of course, Broadacre City with a difference. Broadacre City's easy, motival order identified and unified its vast spaces and separate buildings at the scale of the omnipotent automobile. Each building, without doubt, was to be designed by the Master or by his Taliesin Fellowship, with no room for honky-tonk improvisations. An easy control would be exercised over similar elements within the universal, Usonian vocabulary to the exclusion, certainly, of commercial vulgarities. But the order of the Strip *includes*: it includes at all levels, from the mixture of seemingly incongruous advertising media plus a system of neo-Organic or neo-Wrightian restaurant motifs in Walnut Formica. It is not an order dominated by the expert and made easy for the eye. The moving eye in the moving body must work to pick out and interpret a variety of changing, juxtaposed orders, like the shifting configurations of a Victor Vasarely painting. It is the unity which "maintains, but only just maintains, a control over the clashing elements which compose it. Chaos is very near; its nearness, but its avoidance, gives...force."⁵

Las Vegas is analyzed here only as a phenomenon of architectural communication; its values are not questioned. Commercial advertising, gambling interests, and competitive instincts are another matter. The analysis of a drive-in church in this context would match that of a drive-in restaurant because this is a study of method not content. There is no reason, however, why the methods of commercial persuasion and the skyline of signs should not serve the purpose of civic and cultural enhancement. But this is not entirely up to the architect.

ART AND THE OLD CLICHÉ

Pop Art has shown the value of the old cliché used in a new context to achieve new meaning: to make the common uncommon. Richard Poirier has referred to the "de-creative impulse" in literature:

Eliot and Joyce display an extraordinary vulnerability...to the idioms, rhythms, artifacts associated with certain urban environments or situations. The multitudinous styles of *Ulysses* are so dominated by them that there are only intermittent sounds of Joyce in the novel and no extended passage certifiably is his as distinguished from a mimicked style.⁶

Eliot himself speaks of Joyce's doing the best he can "with the material at hand."⁷ A fitting requiem for the irrelevant works of Art which are today's descendants of a once meaningful Modern architecture are Eliot's lines in *East Coker*:

"That was a way of putting it—
not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-
out poetical fashion,
Leaving one still with the
intolerable wrestle
With words and meanings.
The poetry does not matter."⁸

- 1 Richard Poirier, "T. S. Eliot and the Literature of Waste," *The New Republic* (20 May 1967): 21.
- 2 Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," *Arena, Architectural Association Journal* (June 1967).
- 3 Ibid.: 14.
- 4 Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 8.
- 5 August Heckscher, *The Public Happiness* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1962).
- 6 Poirier, "T. S. Eliot and the Literature of Waste," op. cit.: 20.
- 7 Ibid.: 21.
- 8 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943), 13.

INTRODUCTION

Postscript: Introduction for New Research

"The Contemporary City"

Rem Koolhaas

Rem Koolhaas's 1978 book *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (reissued 1994), presents a surreal postmodern architect's view of New York. Written while the Dutch architect was a fellow at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, the text's cultish popularity is emblematic of renewed interest in the city. The book had lapsed from print, prompting the Japanese journal *Architecture and Urbanism* to excerpt it and include this retrospective reflection by its author.

Like many Europeans, Koolhaas is fascinated by New York's mythic power. While not a typical American city, it nonetheless epitomizes and exaggerates aspects of American character. He finds in Manhattan's "Culture of Congestion" a model for understanding the development of modern architecture. It is more difficult, however, to delineate the contemporary "urban" condition of sprawl, which appears to be a global phenomenon. His recent research, intended for publication as "The Contemporary City," notes fragmentation, a shift of emphasis from center to the periphery, and "spontaneous processes at work" in what have been termed "edge cities": Atlanta, Singapore, and the new towns around Paris. Resistant to classification or rules, these postindustrial landscapes, according to Koolhaas, contain an "unrecognized beauty" worthy of further contemplation. He claims these ubiquitous conditions have been ignored. A similar motivation prompted Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour (VSBA) to write about the American strip in *Learning from Las Vegas* over twenty years ago. Koolhaas and VSBA share a contagious enthusiasm and wit in their theoretical work.

Koolhaas consciously situates his research in opposition to the various postmodern urban proposals of Colin Rowe (collage city), Aldo Rossi (the analogical city), and Leon Krier (the reconstruction of the European city), which focus to different degrees on the premodern European city as

paradigm. Koolhaas is interested in continuing the modern project with revisions, instead of abandoning it. His formal vocabulary derives from Russian Constructivism and the Modern Movement, but without the agenda of social reform that characterized both. His firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, actively engages urban design issues in projects for the new city center for Lille, France and built work such as the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka, Japan. Supported by this experience, his next treatise is likely to be an influential commentary on the postindustrial condition.

REM KOOLHAAS
POSTSCRIPT: INTRODUCTION
FOR NEW RESEARCH
"THE CONTEMPORARY CITY"

Delirious New York was a search in the influence of the metropolitan masses and culture on architecture and urbanism. It was directed towards the connection between new programmes—as an expression of new social demands and new forms. The research proved the existence in Manhattan of a reservoir of popular enthusiasm for "the new age," upon this a number of architects reacted with virtuosity.

The—never expressed—conclusion of the book is, that between the two World Wars architecture did undergo a definitive change. The cultural significance of traditional forms had lost unmistakably its univocability. Today there is no equivalent of that New York architecture, that—starting from mutations and rapid changes—influenced contemporary developments.

The *Contemporary City* is a research into the emerging forms of architecture in the city of today, and wants to search in the consequences and possibilities of actual mutations. This will not be directed to the "official debate," but to documentation and interpretation of a number of apparently spontaneous and independent processes, at work in cities as different as Paris, Atlanta, or Tokyo.

These processes all seem to lead to an unavoidable fragmentation of the existing city, a displacement of the centre of gravity of urban dynamics from the city centre to the urban periphery and a remarkable ingenuity in avoiding urbanistic rules.

After a period of almost exclusive interest in the historical city—and in relation to this: "housing"—a number of architects direct themselves to new territories.

Many of these projects are located in a modern "contemporary" environment, abandoned industrial sites, the periphery of the city or farther away in "new towns" or open landscapes. Programmatically existing subjects are treated in a new way, parks, company

From *Architecture and Urbanism* no. 217 (October 1988): 152. Courtesy of the author and publisher.

headquarters,...and clients change their demands. Possibilities that are still unclear, but that contain the beginning of new forms in architecture and urbanism, without post-modern nostalgia or modern tabula rasa. The common characteristic is an absence of preconceived theories, an eager liberation of a number of self-inflicted dogmas and a new sensibility for the qualities of the surrounding environment.

The Contemporary City will be a retro-active manifesto for the yet to be recognized beauty of the late twentieth-century urban landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Toward the Contemporary City Rem Koolhaas

This polemic, published in an issue of *Design Book Review* devoted to postmodern urbanism, develops Rem Koolhaas's "paramodern alternative" as outlined in the previous essay. A significant part of his critique is the idea that while "purity" (for example, the closure or definition of the autonomous object) may have been desirable in modern buildings, it caused disorienting problems at the urban scale. Modern architecture in the form of urban renewal had devastated historic city centers. Vast, undifferentiated "open space," intended to suggest freedom, replaced the traditional, symbolic, public realm. The automobile changed the pace of experience of the city and ripped its pedestrian-scaled density apart with expressways.

Colin Rowe suggests that urban problems result from modernism's inversion of an important hierarchical relationship: the simple house versus the complex city. Along the same lines, Koolhaas notes that Modern Movement architects like Le Corbusier neglected complexity in their urban schemes. The reduction of complexity, combined with the modern schemes' partial realization, leads Koolhaas to claim that the modern city has yet to be realized. (This parallels Peter Eisenman's claim in chapter four that modernism in architecture has yet to be realized.) Thus, Koolhaas insists on withholding judgement on modern urbanism's potential. His proposed "contemporary" urbanism will be neither "contextual-traditional" nor "urban renewal-modern."

Like Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, Koolhaas accepts the given conditions of the "edge city" and metropolitan sprawl as characteristic of a significant portion of the territory in which architects work. But his strategy of amelioration is different from their proposal in *Learning from Las Vegas*: Koolhaas seeks to intensify and clarify the existing "neomodern" condition, primarily through the provision of open space ("urban voids"), which would contrast with more dense development.

Furthermore, the essay criticizes the naiveté of "utopian" approaches (such as the large-scale reconstruction of the traditional city proposed by Leon Krier) for not recognizing the determinants of what actually gets built. Koolhaas's global architectural practice offers him the chance to test his strategies by building in varied contexts. Whether his "paramodern" proposals can improve upon the ad hoc postindustrial landscape remains to be seen.

REM KOOLHAAS

TOWARD THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

For me, the key moments of modernist composition come from Mies, certainly over Le Corbusier, and from [Ivan Ilyich] Leonidov, much before [Walter] Gropius. I could continue to make a list, but I doubt this would seem very original. Every time I flip through this series of modernist images, however, what strikes me is the extraordinary incongruity between the perfection and instant completeness in their architectural plans (take for instance Mies's Barcelona Pavilion or [Giuseppe] Terragni's Danteum) and the inflexible, nearly infantile, simplicity of their urban projects, imagined as if the complexity of daily life could be accommodated right away through the freedom offered by the free plan, or as if all the experience of fragmentation and what this meant to perspective could occur without disturbing the territory of the city. This is quite clear even in Otto Wagner's deceptive plans for the extension of Vienna. Thus, for me, the most visionary architect, the one who best understood the ineluctable disorder in which we live, remains Frank Lloyd Wright and his Broadacre City.

In the last ten years, the projects I have been working on have been situated in a territory that can no longer be called suburbia but must be referred to as the borders or limits of the periphery. It is here on the edge of the periphery that we should observe how things take shape. The contemporary city, the one composed of these peripheries, ought to yield a sort of manifesto, a premature homage to a form of modernity, which when compared to cities of the past might seem devoid of qualities, but in which we will one day recognize as many gains as losses. Leave Paris and Amsterdam—go look at Atlanta, quickly and without preconceptions: that's all I can say.

From *Design Book Review* no. 17 (Winter 1989): 15–16. First published in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (April 1989). Courtesy of the author and publisher.

Excepting certain airports and a few patches of urban peripheries, the image of the modern city—at least as it was projected—has nowhere been realized. The city that we have to make do with today is more or less made of fragments of modernity—as if abstract formal or stylistic characteristics sometimes survived in their pure state, while the urban program didn't come off. But I wouldn't cry over this failure: the resulting strata of neo-modern, which literally negates the traditional city as much as it negates the original project of modernity, offers new themes to work with. In them one can confront the buildings of this period and the different types of space—something that was impermissible in the pure doctrine of modernism. One can also learn from them to play with a substrata, mixing the built with the ideal project. This is a situation comparable to one for which the nineteenth century was much criticized, when in Milan, Paris, or Naples the strategy of remodeling without destroying the preexisting city was applied.

In the last fifteen years there has been an immense production of images for pieces of cities, which dense or not, have a power of attraction that cannot be denied. The problem is that they have been conceived in a sort of unconscious utopia, as if the powers that be, the decision mechanisms, and the means that are really available might be enchanted by the beauty or interest they portray. As if reality were going to latch onto these schemes and come to see how important it was to build them, which as far as I know is still not happening. Rather than count on this sort of fascination, or bet on the absolute authority of architecture, I think you have to ask yourself which way the forces that contribute to defining space are heading. Are they urban-oriented or the opposite? Do they ask for order or disorder? Do they play on the continuous or the discontinuous? Whatever the answer may be, there's a movement there and dynamics that you have to get to know, because they are the matter of the project.

Take for instance the IBA (Internationale Bauausstellung) in Berlin. In 1977, before the final programming of the exhibit, Oswald Ungers and I were the lone dissenting voices from [Leon] Krier, [Aldo] Rossi, [Josef Paul] Kleihues, and the others, who had already decided to make Berlin a test-case city for the reconstruction of the European city. Ungers and I pleaded for a quite different route, one that put history first: the city was destroyed, torn apart, punctured, and *this* was its memory. Second was the economy: West Berlin was stagnating, losing population ever since the construction of the wall despite thousands of institutional and fiscal incentives, and thus one could not see how a sufficient turnaround would suddenly occur to economically justify a project of general reurbanization. These were strong enough reasons to suggest that the IBA should not have taken place. Instead one had the chance in Berlin to enhance reality, to adapt to what already existed. Above all, Berlin provided the occasion to make of the city a sort of territorial archipelago—a system of architectural islands surrounded by forests and lakes in which the infrastructures could play without causing damage. It could have been realised in an almost picturesque mode (like [Gustav] Peichl's stations) with a free periphery from which one slides into great vegetal interstices. In the long run, the historical accidents (Berlin destroyed by the war, and redestroyed by the 1950s) could have offered a metaphoric role very much the opposite of the one chosen by IBA.

Remembering the projects of Mies, of [Bruno] Taut, the twin towers of Leonidov, and the like, one must also remember that these projects were first great distributors of space, more spatial definers than mere objects. I admit that there was a utopia in this

vision that was just as strong, and perhaps in symmetry to the current desire to densify, construct, and give at all costs an architectural dimension. Nowadays every empty space is prey to the frenzy to fill, to stop up. But in my opinion there are two reasons that make urban voids at least one of the principal lines of combat, if not the only line, for people interested in the city. The first is quite simple: it is now easier to control empty space than to play on full volumes and agglomerate shapes that, though no one can rightly say why, have become uncontrollable. The second is something I've noticed: emptiness, landscape, space—if you want to use them as a lever, if you want to include them in a scheme—can serve as a battlefield and can draw quite general support from everyone. This is no longer the case for an architectural work, which today is always suspect and inspires prior distrust.

One of the current projects of OMA is the reurbanization of Bijlmermeer, the largest of the modernist *grands ensembles* constructed in Holland in the 1960s—it's something like Le Corbusier without talent, but conceived according to impeccable doctrine. It is an immense territory—just one of its twelve sections equals the area of the historic center of Amsterdam. Today on this immense surface where twelve capital cities might have been built, nothing is happening. The apartments are empty, people live there only in hopes of moving somewhere else, and there were serious discussions to demolish the whole project. But when looking closer, it seemed to us that these negative elements were beyond removal. It turned out that a lot of people—singles, couples, divorcees, those dedicated to the arts, and all of them necessarily motorized—were quite attached to Bijlmermeer and preferred to stay there. They enjoyed the light and space, and the indissociable feeling of freedom and abandonment. Thus it wasn't the spaces and buildings that were insufferable but rather the system of aberrant streets and garage connections that radically cut off people from their dwellings. For twenty years neither public nor private initiative has proposed anything to improve this forgotten territory. Our decision was not to alter the housing units but rather to try to give a force or intensity to the open spaces, superimposing on the original project (a giant beehive structure filled with trees) a design where the highways, the parking garages, the schools, and the stadiums would be articulated on islands of greenery and relate to a central armature of new services, including laboratories, research centers, and movie studios. This would constitute an indispensable investment if one wants to start national campaign to deal with what at the moment is a huge blight in the middle of Holland.

If my interest in the banal architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, the derivatives Ernesto Rogers and Richard Neutra, seems a somewhat boring source, I can only answer that to die of boredom is not so bad. There were much worse architects than Neutra. But let's face it, I like that kind of architecture, and quite often it has been magnificently built. It has also at times reached a carefreeness and a freedom that interests me—not that I'm the only one to take an interest in it. But the question at stake is what Bruno Vayssière and Patrice Noviant have defined as "statistic architecture": power architecture whose power is easy, that has moved without transition from the isolated experience to the series, from the series to repetition, and so on until you get sick of it. I'm trying to live with but also to detach myself from it. And since nostalgia disturbs me, I'm trying more and more not to be modern, but to be contemporary.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond Delirious
Rem Koolhaas

This recent article of Rem Koolhaas's is an excerpt from a lecture (University of Toronto School of Architecture, November 1993) in which the architect discussed his recent large-scale projects for the city, and the urban strategies devised by his firm. For a competition for the Parisian suburb of Melun-Sénart, the architect comes upon "a new conception of the city, a city no longer defined by its built space but by its absence or empty spaces." The metaphor of an "archipelago" of green spaces, places reserved from development, recurs in these essays. This idea signals his concern about unmitigated expansion into the landscape. For example, in the urban design project for Lille, the architect advocates resistance to sprawl through very high density building. Furthermore, he designed this project without the limitation of specific function, in order to maintain flexibility. (William McDonough also promotes planning for flexibility to allow reuse of buildings, which is more ecological than new construction; see ch. 8.) Flexibility underlies the modernist "open plan" (with connotations of honesty and freedom) and characterizes investigations of shelter by Buckminster Fuller and others in the 1960s. Koolhaas's earlier projects combined functions not usually found in a single program; the results of this "cross-programming" were often surreal. (See Tschumi, ch. 3)

Now directing an immense urban development initiative, Koolhaas reflects with modesty on his "generation of May 1968," the student radicals. He expresses surprise at being entrusted with such authority. Will the Lille project actually advance beyond the modernist model of the "tower in the park," or will it simply exceed it in scale?

REM KOOLHAAS
BEYOND DELIRIOUS

I want to talk about a number of urban projects and to hint at certain problems in the contemporary urban condition which our work tries to address.

We all know the image of [Giovanni Battista] Piranesi's reconstruction of the Roman forum and we are all aware that it represents a very intense form of the city. We recognize a number of major geometrical forms associated with the major public elements, and between these we recognize smaller debris, programmatic plankton in which presumably the less formal activities of the city are accommodated. This mixture of formal and informal elements and the mixture of order and disorder which this single image represents are the essential conditions of the city.

We also know this second kind of city, and although it happens to be a part of the belt of new cities around Paris, it could as well be a part of Toronto or Tokyo or South Korea or Singapore. What is ironic is that latent underneath this model of the city you still see the major geometrical figures, the attempt at a degree of coherence, strangely Piranesian forms and organization, but without any evidence of the urban condition that Piranesi suggested or imagined. There is evidence of the debris filling the fault lines between the major figures. Where the first image inspires a certain amount of enthusiasm, we all feel degrees of disappointment if not revulsion for the second kind of city (even though it is now the dominant form and even though it is important that we declare it "city" because otherwise we are part of a culture and civilization which is simply unable to make the city.) The works I am showing have to be read against this background.

From *Canadian Architect* no. 39 (January 1994): 28–30. Courtesy of the author and publisher. This essay was presented as a lecture in November 1993 at the University of Toronto School of Architecture.

I also want to talk about my generation, as a kind of caricature of the generation of May 1968 which shouldn't be taken too seriously but shouldn't be ignored. Our generation has had two reactions to this contemporary urban condition. One basically ignored it, or to give a more positive interpretation, courageously resisted it, as Leon Krier's big theoretical reconstruction of Washington. There is a rediscovery of the city, a new loyalty to the idea of the city and our generation has been very important in claiming the city as a very essential territory of activity. But what is paradoxical in this reclamation is that it seems as if we have completely lost the power and ability to operate on and with the city.

The other part of my generation has taken the exact opposite track. For example, take Coop Himmelblau's project for a new town just outside Paris called Melun-Sénart. Where Leon Krier and his half of the generation are rebuilding the city, Coop Himmelblau and the other half is abandoning any claims that the city can be rebuilt, throwing up their arms about our ability to even reconstruct any recognizable form of the city. Out of this debate, they make spectacle—a rhetorical play where instead of a series of formal axes there is just composition, inspired on the unconscious and an essentially chaotic aesthetic.

What is painful in this having on the one hand a kind of delusion of power cut off from operational effectiveness, and on the other hand an abandonment of any claims to operational effectiveness, is that a completely devastated territory is left, which, in retrospect, our generation rediscovered but with which it was unable to find a significant relationship. And that is of course a pretty tragic condition.

Our office also participated in the competition for Melun-Sénart and wrestled with the same condition, the same hopelessness of the contemporary form of the city. Paris is now encircled by a ring of new towns. Melun-Sénart is the last part of the ring, and when we started we found an incredibly beautiful French landscape. Essentially we were confronted with an innocent scene where we as architects had to imagine a new city. We felt like criminals because with the present powerlessness to imagine, build and construct a new city, and knowing the hopelessness of creating a new city with the present substance and conditions, it felt almost repulsive to have to imagine a new town on this canvas.

Using this moment of revulsion, we started to ask ourselves whether there was a new technique, a way of working with this weakness or incompetence, a potential to reverse the situation, whereby we could no longer claim that we could build a city, but could find other elements with which we could nevertheless create a new form of urban condition. We were not so much thinking about what we could build as analyzing the situation to determine where we would under no circumstances build.

To enjoy the forests, we decided not to build on the edges to the north and south. Between them was a superb zone of landscape with a number of smaller forests that French kings had used to chase deers from one forest to another and then shoot them in between, so we decided not to build there. Also, we decided not to build near the highway. We acquired by this systematic series of eliminations a kind of Chinese figure where we would make a statement about certainty—we are not going to be building here and we are not interested in building here. As we controlled this system of void spaces or landscape spaces, we systematically and enthusiastically abandoned any claim of control over the residual lands and thought that they would probably turn into what the French call "merde." The more sublime quality of the green spaces, in contrast, might give us a

new conception of the city, a city no longer defined by its built space but by its absences or empty spaces.

We were quite pleased with this project, done in 1989, in that we were imagining a way of turning incompetence into the beginning of a new relationship with the city where this weakness could be incorporated and become part of an engine of recuperation.

Another recent investigation is the idea that in certain conditions, buildings of incredible density might be important instruments to contradict or resist the expansion of every city.

We have been experimenting with types of buildings which are frankly inspired by the Forbidden City in Hong Kong, which was destroyed last year. It was an incredible block—it was only approximately 180 by 120 metres but almost solid building, with minute air shafts separating buildings, sometimes not even air shafts. The total surface of the buildings was something like 300,000 square metres, and in this illegal development there was no programmatic stability. Any program here would, over time, undergo a series of perpetual modifications, so it could start as a house, then become a brothel, then a factory, then a heroin plant, then become a hospital. The liberating formula of such a clump of a building could be that we would no longer have to be very intense about making buildings for specific programs.

If we consider these clumps of buildings mainly as permanent accommodation for provisional activities, there is a whole zone of potential relaxation for the architectural profession. We no longer have to look for the rigid coincidence between form and program, and we can simply plan new masses which will be able to absorb whatever our culture generates.

So here, around an intersection outside Antwerp, a massive cluster of buildings which is specifically designed to keep the area around it free. The area is maybe a million and a half square metres, which we calculated would then liberate two square kilometres.

Next year the tunnel between England and the Continent opens. The French imagine that the combined effort of the tunnel and the TGV high speed rail will be drastic. The train from Lille to Paris used to take two hours thirty minutes. It's now fifty minutes. Disneyland is forty-five minutes. Lille to London was thirteen hours; it will be reduced to one hour and ten minutes. It will be forty minutes to Brussels, under two hours to Germany. These facts completely redesign or reinvent this area of Europe, for instance to the point that the English will buy houses here because it will be faster to go from Lille to the centre of London than from its own periphery. If you imagine not distance as a crucial given but time it takes to get somewhere then there is an irregular figure which represents the entire territory that is now less than one hour and thirty minutes from Lille. If you add up all the people in this territory, it turns out to be 60 million people. So the TGV and the tunnel could fabricate a virtual metropolis spread in an irregular manner, of which Lille, now a fairly depressing unimportant city, becomes, somehow by accident, completely artificially, the headquarters. And, equally accidentally, we became the planners of this whole operation in 1989.

We were selected and then surrounded by a table of experts looking with incredible expectation at us. Giving us a blank sheet of paper, they asked us, can you please resolve this conflict between the TGV tunnel and highway, because this is the Gordian knot of

our project. That was a very important moment for me in terms of my position as a member of this May '68 generation, because I realized that I was simply not prepared for this kind of question. In my subconscious, as an architect, I never anticipated that a position as important as this one would be entrusted to a member of my generation. Somehow, I thought that highways were designed by uncles, by people with more robust nervous systems than myself, and by more plodding horses, and I felt in comparison like a race horse and therefore free of this kind of demand. That was an important moment in realizing how our generation had conceptually cut itself off from an operational world. Because I thought that the French were simply megalomaniacs and this whole project would probably never happen, and because I was surrounded by this rope of expectant experts, I decided to bluff and said, we know exactly how to resolve this problem: where the two lane TGV railway widens to six, we will run the highway parallel to the station. We will also run it underground, and in between, we will create the largest parking lot in the history of Christendom—8,000 places, and in this way, an unbelievable metropolitan concentrate of infrastructure. We used this underground literally as the basis for our project. The advantage of having this whole thing hidden underground was that it would co-exist with the scale of Europe and would not necessarily be too oppressive for the existing city.

The project in the first phase was supposed to contain a previously unimaginable 1.5 million square metres, so we had to prove to Europe that the towers could be nice, you didn't have to be afraid of towers. We also decided that the triangular area between the old station and the new station which we first imagined as a kind of plaza, could be interpreted as a plane, and that we could tilt the plane in. As tilted, part of it could become a building, toward the city, but another part, on a shear line with the tunnel, could be pushed down so that we could liberate the flank of the tunnel, creating a window so that the arrival of the TGV train (and therefore the reason for its drastic transformation) could be revealed and made part of the urban understanding.

We proposed, in terms of pure symbolism, to put a number of towers on the station itself, integrated with the station. The French in their Cartesian manner calculated that it would be eight percent more expensive to build them as bridges over the station, but that was a justified investment in symbolism. What we could symbolize was that it was not important that the presence of these towers was in Lille (actually their being in Lille is almost a coincidence or arbitrary condition), but that the really important and defining aspect of this address is its simultaneous distance of sixty minutes to both London and Paris. It's not where this building is, but the places with which it is connected that define its importance.

We were not the architects of the entire scheme. We proposed in the first instance a series of very sober and neutral envelopes for the towers, saying that the different architects could then liberate individual buildings from this envelope. We remained in a strange mixture of power and powerlessness, the *architecte en chef*, which meant that we would negotiate with the other architects without ever really imposing anything. We had a very strange relationship with all these buildings in the sense that we established the entire section and all the relationships, but we were not the architects.

There was one interesting moment when I asked the director, a brilliant developer with whom we worked closely, why he never said no in the beginning when we came with all our insane proposals—putting the towers over the station, the sinking of the

highway. He said his strategy to succeed into the twenty-first century was to create within a limited territory what he called a *dynamique d'enfer*—a dynamic from hell, which is so relentlessly complex that all the partners are involved in it like prisoners chained to each other so that nobody would be able to escape. Unwittingly but enthusiastically we had worked on developing a *dynamique d'enfer* so that is now one of the items on our palette.

This first part of the project, which started its initial planning in 1989, will be finished next year and the whole thing is now one of the largest building sites in Europe. What was exciting here was that we introduced buildings on a scale that Europe had almost never seen, therefore we could experiment with completely new typologies. More and more our major interest is not to make architecture but to manipulate the urban planes to create maximum programmatic effect.

7. THE SCHOOL OF VENICE

INTRODUCTION

Territory and Architecture

Vittorio Gregotti

Vittorio Gregotti is an architect and theorist who serves as editor in chief of the Italian journals *Casabella* and *Rassegna*. Through these activities, he has been responsible for introducing and framing many of the themes that have been important to the Italian critique of the Modern Movement and beyond. Gregotti, Aldo Rossi, and Manfredo Tafuri, all represented in this chapter, are associated with the "School of Venice," officially the Architectural Institute of the University of Venice, or IAUV. The Institute's members include neorationalists and neo-Marxists, who have in common a concern for "the fundamentally social role of architecture" and intend their work as a critique of modernism and modernization.¹

Gregotti's editorials from the 1980s, such as "The Necessity of Theory" and "The Exercise of Detailing," (ch. 12) along with his untranslated 1966 book, *Il territorio dell'architettura*, are characteristic expressions of the neorationalist movement. Known collectively as *La Tendenza*, the Italian neorationalists attempt to "restate theoretical foundations of architectural design" and develop a logical design method.² Kenneth Frampton often cites Gregotti's book as one of the fundamental texts of the postmodern movement in architecture. This essay, reprinted from the British journal *Architectural Design*, brings to an English-speaking audience a few of the significant ideas from his book, along with a brief description of his award-winning 1974 design for the University of Calabria campus.

As the title suggests, Gregotti adds two important ideas (*place* and *genius loci*) to the neo-rationalist agenda of the city and form-making typologies. (ch. 5) His theory of *place* and *genius loci* derives from Heideggerian phenomenology. (ch. 9, 10) Following philosopher Martin Heidegger, the author asserts an origin for architecture in placing the first stone on the ground to recognize a *place*. This is consistent with Gregotti's general definition of the architect's task: to create "an architecture of context" by revealing nature through modification, measurement, and utilization of the landscape.

Gregotti's emphasis on *measure* is similar to Heidegger, who says, "The taking of measure is what is poetic in dwelling."³ Formal interventions reveal the poetic truth of the site ("the essence of the environmental context"), which is necessitated by the fact that landscape and nature are broadly seen as "the sum total of all things" geographical and historical. Examples of this modification include ordering nature geometrically, idealizing it, and invoking it as a mirror of truth.⁴ Gregotti's site strategy is suggestive of the "constructed site," or what might be seen as a tectonic approach to making a landscape.⁵ This is consistent with his approach to building; in the design project shown, it is evident that Gregotti, like Rossi, is interested in morphology.

While his writings reference phenomenologists Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, they also cite Claude Lévi-Strauss. Gregotti's position is not simple; one detects the influence of structural linguistics in his emphasis on the constitution of architecture by the measurement of intervals, rather than by isolated objects. (ch. 2) In a definition of space that parallels semiotologist Ferdinand de Saussure's discussion of language, Gregotti says, "space is composed of differences, discontinuities considered as value and as experience." In sum, Gregotti's theory is synthetic. He recognizes the whole web of relations in which one makes an architectural intervention.

- 1 Alan Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism: A Retrospective Glance," in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition: Architectural Essays 1980-1987* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 251.
- 2 Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, "Neo-Rationalism and Figuration," *Architectural Design* 54, no. 5-6 (1984): 15-20.
- 3 Martin Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells...", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 221.
- 4 Vittorio Gregotti, "Architecture, Environment, Nature," in Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture Culture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 400.
- 5 Carol Burns, "On Site," in Andrea Kahn, ed., *Drawing Building Text* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), 146-167.

VITTORIO GREGOTTI

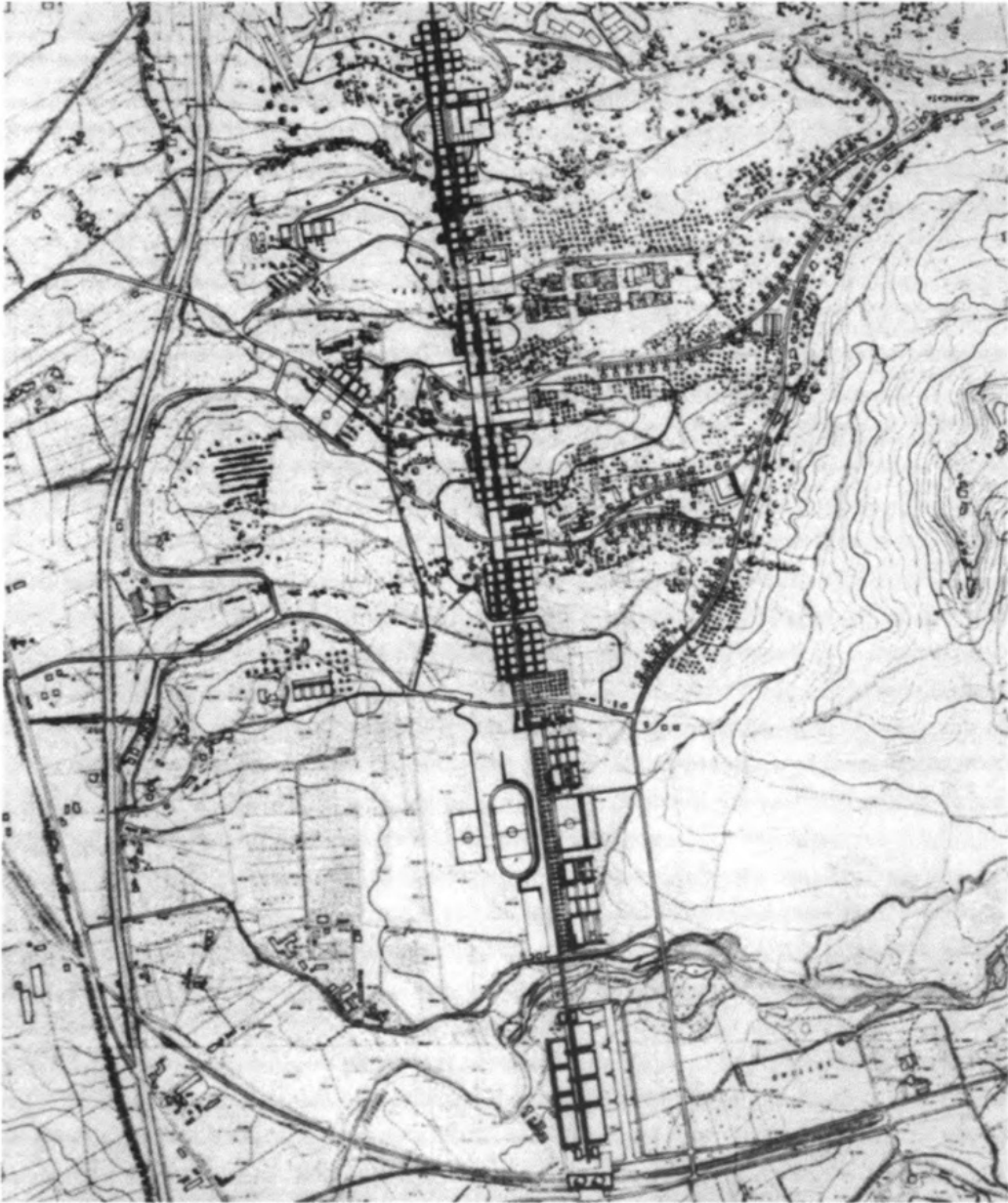
TERRITORY AND ARCHITECTURE

While presenting my project for the University of Calabria, I thought again of some of the theoretical reflections I had made in *The Territory of Architecture* ten years earlier, in 1966, for they seemed relevant to many aspects of the overall layout of the Calabria project.

The theory of the materials of architecture and the pre-eminence of the figure as their organisational structure was central to *The Territory of Architecture*, but it did not resolve the specific organisational problems at Calabria. It concerned itself primarily with questions of theory and history, whether as hypotheses of the organisation of personal and group memory, or as a specific history of the discipline—the vacillations of its margins and the shifts in its centre of interests, its territory, and its privileged relations with other disciplines. However, the physical spirit of history is the built environment which surrounds us, the manner of its transformation into visible things, its gathering of depths and meanings which differ not only because of what the environment appears to be, but also because of what it *is* structurally. The environment is composed of the traces of its own history. If geography is therefore the way in which the signs of history solidify and are superimposed in a form, the architectural project has the task of drawing attention to the essence of the environmental context through the transformation of form.

From 1963–64 onwards I began to put these problems at the centre of my reflections on architecture: my first opportunity to experiment with their consequences in planning was at the XIIIth Triennale in Milan in 1964. Since then, I have always tried to keep the relationship between my theory and my work open, if not consistent. I have attempted, for instance, to understand what one could conclude from reflecting on the area of landscape and nature as the sum total of all things and of their past configurations. Nature, in this sense, is not seen as an indifferent, inscrutable force or a divine cycle of creation,

From *Architectural Design Profile* 59, no. 5–6 (1985): 28–34. Courtesy of the author and publisher.



Vittorio Gregotti, site plan of the project for the University of Calabria.

but rather as a collection of material things whose reasons and relations architecture has the task of revealing. We must therefore modify, redouble, measure, situate, and utilise the landscape in order to know and meet the environment as a geographical totality of concrete things which are inseparable from their historical organisation.

This can only be done if we abandon the sociological or ecological or administrative notion of the environment as an imprisoned element and think of it instead as material for architecture. It should be made clear that this idea of the environment is not a system in which architecture is dissolved, but is on the contrary a load-bearing material

for the architectural project, enabling new planning principles and methods to accommodate the spirit of the specific terrain.

The spirit behind these new methods is *modification*. Modification reveals an awareness of being part of a pre-existing whole, of changing one part of a system to transform the whole. Through its etymological root, *modus*, modification is linked to the concept of measure and the geometrical world of regulated things. It is modification which transforms *place* into *architecture* and establishes the original symbolic act of making contact with the earth, with the physical environment, with the idea of nature as a totality. Such a concept of the project sees architecture as a system of relations and distances, as the measurement of intervals rather than as isolated objects. Thus the specificity of the solution is closely related to differences in situation, context, or environment. We do not, therefore, conceive of space as a uniform and infinite extension where no place is privileged: space is not of identical value in all directions, but rather is composed of differences, discontinuities considered as value and as experience. The organisation of space, therefore, starts from the idea of *place*: the project transforms *place* into *settlement*.

The origin of architecture does not lie in the hut, the cave or in the mythical "Adam's house in paradise." Before a support was transformed into a column, a roof into a pediment, and stone heaped upon stone, man put stone on the ground in order to recognise place in the midst of the unknown universe and thereby measure and modify it. Like every aspect of measuring, this required a radical simplicity. From this point of view, there are essentially two ways to place oneself in relation to the context. The instruments of the first way are mimetic imitation, organic assimilation, and visible complexity. The second way uses measurement: distance, definition, rotation within complexity.

In the first case the problem is mirroring reality, in the second it is establishing the double. The latter mode is based on restless division: putting up a wall, building an enclosure, defining regions, producing a densely articulated interior which will correspond to the fragmentation and differences of behaviour. A simple exterior will thus appear as a measure of the larger environment's complexity. For this reason a material is not actually a thing of nature: it is more earthly and more abstract, alluding to the form of the place, to things as they are combined, but also to what is beneath, to the stable geological support, to a nature which is historically transformed, to a nature which is the product of thought, and which as a result of being frequented or settled has become a shared memory.

The project, then, must be established upon the regulating tradition of style and *métier*. But what gives architectural truth and concreteness to this tradition is its meeting with the site, for only by perceiving the site as a specific environment can those exceptions which generate architecture emerge.

My current work explores the implications of developing an architecture of context. This has led me to confront the problem of implementing large-scale works and to examine which principles and methods would stand up to the realities of production. I have been especially concerned with work environments in industry and universities, and was involved with the important competition for the University of Calabria. The project's main proposal was to base the design of the new university on a principle of settlement. This principle is evinced by an irregular alignment and by the connection between it and the sinuous terrain of the countryside. It functions as a way of gauging the landscape and

regulating and characterising a large-scale design. Alignment and discontinuity are, moreover, ancient and characteristic methods of regulating settlements in Calabria.

The project also attempts to bring about an interaction between morphological and functional systems. The first system consists of a linear succession of university departments running across the hill system to the plain of the River Crati. The blocks housing the departmental activities accommodate the varying levels of the land and are laid out on a square plan on the axis of a bridge. The second system considers the morphology of the hills, the succession of their slopes and peaks (which carry the local road system), and their relationship to the fabric of the low-tiered houses along the northern slope intended as university residences. Since the southern slopes are cultivated with olive trees, an alternating succession of residential units and natural spaces results. The university services, which are open towards the exterior, are situated at the junctures between the bridge system and the hilltop roads.

The 7m-wide upper lane of the bridge caters for public transport and goods traffic; the lower lane is for pedestrians and internal student traffic. Between the two lanes, the various installations run along a conduit with a triangular section. The tall blocks of the university departments are linked to the bridge by a narrow body of services placed perpendicular or parallel to the bridge depending on the type of cube.

The whole layout of the university is regulated by a grid of 25.20 x 25.20m extended over two modules to the two sides of the axis, forming a settlement strip 110m wide. The tall blocks vary between two and five storeys to maintain a constant height of 232.40m above sea-level and project onto the line of transverse section of the valley below. They are enclosed by load-bearing reinforced concrete walls measuring 21.60 x 25.20m at distances of 3.60m on centre. The horizontal structures are supported by metal beams with a span of 19.60m for internal linkage. These control the positioning of the structures of the floors, spaces between floors, and intermediate floors. In the second type, the internal structures are also reinforced concrete, and pillars divide the interior into two different articulated spaces: on the one hand, small spaces for studies and offices; on the other, large collective spaces for laboratories, lecture halls, libraries, etc.

The natural lighting for the interiors is obtained through large openings in the perimeter wall and the transparent, partially sun-screened roofing. This strategically regulates the view of the natural landscape and external architecture.

The outer modules of the grid are occupied by the extension of the tall blocks on the ground floor to form a support base and house the more cumbersome technical equipment. The 250-seat lecture halls are suspended between the volumes of two lateral blocks in order to leave the continuity of the slope unbroken and form a passageway below the tiered arches. The blocks which house the various departments and a whole range of teaching and research activities form the basic element in the grouping and set up a morphological referent for the university's future growth and change of layout. The final phase of the project, providing accommodation for 12,000 students, suggested the doubling of the departmental spaces. In this projection, a rapid link-up service would replace the bridge and would continue both to the new station with parking facilities at the mouth of the Paola tunnel and to additional parking at the Cozenza tunnel. The level part of the northern area would house the buildings and supply areas of the main regional sports centre and the laboratories of the national research centre.

At this stage in its development, the university organism would be making full use of two access systems deriving from the settlement system: the two ends of alignment would be linked by a fast, efficient urban transport system while the hill roads would continue to function as they had in the first phase. The squares would be the meeting point of the two systems.

The plan for the University of Calabria was the result of a competition won in 1974 by a group consisting of E. Battisti, V. Gregotti, H. Matsui, P. Nicolin, F. Purini, C. Rusconi Clerici. Urban Planning was by Laris.

Collaborators on the project:

P. Cerri, V. Gregotti, H. Matsui (Gregotti Associati); G. Grandori, G. Ballio, A. Castiglioni, G. Colombo (Structural Engineers); Tenke VRC (Engineers).

INTRODUCTION

An Analogical Architecture Aldo Rossi

A leader in the Italian neorationalist movement *La Tendenza*, Aldo Rossi earned international acclaim for *The Architecture of the City*, published in Italian in 1966 and translated to English and published by Oppositions Books (the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies) in 1982. This central postmodern text is supported by the body of influential architectural work, both drawn and built, that Rossi has produced since the 1960s. The embodiment of his theoretical ideas in design work explains the impact of Rossi's architecture.

His involvement at the Architectural Institute of the University of Venice (IAUV or "School of Venice"), began with research in 1963–65 and resumed with teaching in 1975. In the interim, he taught for five years at the Milan Polytechnic, had four solo exhibitions, and edited a number of publications. This article and the companion piece that follows, "Thoughts about My Recent Work," appeared in *Architecture and Urbanism* as part of a special feature.¹

"An Analogical Architecture" is an explication of Rossi's design method, which relies on the "logical-formal operation" of analogy as defined by psychoanalyst Carl Jung:

"logical" thought is what is expressed in words directed to the outside world in the form of discourse. "Analogical" thought is sensed yet unreal, imagined yet silent; it is not a discourse but rather a meditation on themes of the past, an interior monologue.

Rossi uses analogical in the sense of retrieving the "archaic, unexpressed, and practically inexpressible" thought in memory. Kenneth Frampton's discussion of "analogical form" as part of his program of Critical Regionalism (ch. 11) may derive from Rossi, in its recall of primitive building forms and their associations.

Analogy explains Rossi's recourse to types, and to "certain forms of the utmost clarity [which] awaken a kind of collective memory."² Alan Colquhoun observes that Vittorio Gregotti and Rossi use type in different ways:

Remaining open to contingency, Gregotti seems to display the "type" in the process of being eroded or transformed; Rossi displays it at such a level of generality that, no longer vulnerable to technological or social interference, it stands frozen in a surreal timelessness.³

The neorationalists were introduced to typology in the early 1960s through Giulio Carlo Argan's published research on Quatremère de Quincy, the nineteenth-century theorist whose distinction between ideal type (*type*) and physical model (*modèle*) they have adopted. (ch. 5)

Rossi is a self-proclaimed rationalist, but his work is nonetheless poetic because of the superimposition of something surreal (or "abnormal" in Colquhoun's words) on a geometric order. (His exquisite collages are vivid postmodern interpretations, even appropriations, of the work of surrealist painter Giorgio Di Chirico.) Rossi's buildings are "abnormal" in terms of their typological signification of function; for example, his Gallarate housing and Modena cemetery designs use uncannily similar forms for radically different programs.

Asserting that relationships or context determine meaning, Rossi says that fixed objects (forms) can be subject to changing meaning. Elemental architectural forms can thus be reused for different purposes, as in the above example. This parallels structuralist ideas of the role of fixed elements (received structures) in language. (ch. 2) To confirm this connection, Rossi cites structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Architecture of the City*. In this book, Rossi points to the presence of morphological types with flexibility of function in the urban context. Semiotician Umberto Eco's "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture" challenges Rossi's notion that a building's function can change without loss of meaning. Because for

Eco, function is the primary meaning denoted by architecture. Eco's theory of architectural meaning does allow, however, for the secondary (symbolic, aesthetic, etc.) functions connoted by architecture to change with the passage of time.

Rossi's interventions in the traditional city aim to shock by making their differences clear, rather than attempting to blend in. (Solà-Morales Rubió discusses this strategy of "contrasti" in chapter four.) Rossi reasserts the significance of context indirectly, quoting Walter Benjamin; the Frankfurt School theorist says, "I am unquestionably deformed by relationships with everything that surrounds me." This citation suggests a link between the IAUUV and the Frankfurt School, a link made more explicit in the historical work of Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co.

- 1 The Japanese magazine, then five years old, had already asserted itself as an important critical and theoretical venue.
- 2 Alan Colquhoun, "Rational Architecture," *Architectural Design* 45, no. 6 (1975): 368.
- 3 Ibid.: 366.

ALDO ROSSI

AN ANALOGICAL ARCHITECTURE

Although in my architecture things are seen in a fixed way, I realize that in recent projects certain characteristics, memories, and above all associations have proliferated or become clearer, often yielding unforeseen results.

Each of these designs has been due increasingly to that concept of the "analogical city" about which I wrote sometime ago; meanwhile that concept has developed in the spirit of analogy.

Writing on that subject, I stated that it was mainly a matter of a logical-formal operation that could be translated as a design method.

In order to illustrate this concept, I cited the example of the view of Venice by Canaletto in the Parma Museum, in which Palladio's project for the Rialto Bridge, the Basilica, and the Palazzo Chiericati arranged and depicted as if the painter had reproduced an actual townscape. The three monuments, of which one is only a project, constitute an analogue of the real Venice composed of definite elements related to both the history of architecture and that of the city itself. The geographical transposition of the two existing monuments[†] to the site of the intended bridge forms a city recognizably constructed as a locus of purely architectonic values.

This concept of the analogical city has been further elaborated in the spirit of analogy toward the conception of an analogical architecture.

In the correspondence between [Sigmund] Freud and [Carl] Jung, the latter defines the concept of analogy in the following way:

From *Architecture and Urbanism* 56 (May 1976): 74-76. Translated by David Stewart. Courtesy of the author and publisher.

I have explained that "logical" thought is what is expressed in words directed to the outside world in the form of discourse. "Analogical" thought is sensed yet unreal, imagined yet silent; it is not a discourse but rather a meditation on themes of the past, an interior monologue. Logical thought is "thinking in words." Analogical thought is archaic, unexpressed, and practically inexpressible in words.

I believe I have found in this definition a different sense of history conceived of not simply as fact, but rather as a series of things, of affective objects to be used by the memory or in a design.

Thus, I believe I have also discovered the fascination of the picture by Canaletto in which the various works of architecture by Palladio and their removal in space constitute an analogical representation that could not have been expressed in words.

Today I see my architecture within the context and limits of a wide range of associations, correspondences, and analogies. Whether in the purism of my first works or the present investigation of more complex resonances, I have always regarded the object, the product, the project as being endowed with its own individuality that is related to the theme of human and material evolution. In reality research into architectural problems signifies little more to me than research of a more general nature, whether it be personal or collective, applied to a specific field.

My associates and I are striving to create new interests and alternatives.

The quotation from Walter Benjamin: "I am unquestionably deformed by relationships with everything that surrounds me," might be said to contain the thought underlying this essay. It also accompanies my architecture today.

There is a continuity in this, even though in the most recent projects general and personal tensions emerge with greater clarity, and in various drawings the uneasiness of different parts and elements can be felt to have superimposed itself on the geometrical order of the composition.

The deformation of the relationships between those elements surrounding, as it were, the main theme, draws me toward an increasing rarefaction of parts in favor of more complex compositional methods. This deformation affects the materials themselves and destroys their static image, stressing instead their elementality and superimposed quality. The question of things themselves, whether as compositions or components—drawings, buildings, models, or descriptions—appears to me increasingly more suggestive and convincing. But this is not to be interpreted in the sense of "*vers une architecture*" nor as a new architecture. I am referring rather to familiar objects, whose form and position are already fixed, but whose meanings may be changed. Barns, stables, sheds, workshops, etc. Archetypal objects whose common emotional appeal reveals timeless concerns.

Such objects are situated between inventory and memory. Regarding the question of memory, architecture is also transformed into autobiographical experience; places and things change with the superimposition of new meanings. Rationalism seems almost reduced to an objective logic, the operation of a reductive process which in time produces characteristic features.

In that respect I consider one of the studies realized in the course of the work on the Modena Cemetery competition as especially important. In redrawing this design and in the very process of rendering the various elements and applying the colors to parts that

required emphasis, the drawing itself acquired a complete autonomy vis-à-vis the original design, so much so that the original conception might be said to be only an analogue of the finished project. It suggested a new idea based on the labyrinth and the contradictory notion of the distance traveled. In formal terms this composition is like the game of "royal goose."^{††} In fact, I believe this resemblance explains its fascination and the reason why we produced several variations of the same form. Afterwards, it occurred to me that the "death" square is particularly noticeable as if it contained some profound automatic mechanism quite apart from the painted space itself.

No work, other than by its own technical means, can entirely resolve or liberate the motives that inspired it; for this reason, a more or less conscious repetition is produced in the work of anyone who labors continuously as an artist. In the best of cases, this can lead to a process of perfection but it can also produce total silence. That is the repetition of objects themselves.

In my design for the residential block in the Gallarate district of Milan there is an analogical relationship with certain engineering works that mix freely with both the corridor typology and a related feeling I have always experienced in the architecture of the traditional Milanese tenements, where the corridor signifies a life-style bathed in everyday occurrences, domestic intimacy, and varied personal relationships. However, another aspect of this design was made clear to me by Fabio Reinhart driving through the San Bernardino Pass, as we often did, in order to reach Zurich from the Ticino Valley; Reinhart noticed the repetitive element in the system of open-sided tunnels, and therefore the inherent pattern. I understood on another occasion how I must have been conscious of that particular structure—and not only of the forms—of the gallery, or covered passage, without necessarily intending to express it in a work of architecture.

In like fashion I could put together an album relating to my designs and consisting only of things already seen in other places: galleries, silos, old houses, factories, farm-houses in the Lombard countryside or near Berlin, and many more—something between memory and an inventory.

I do not believe that these designs are leading away from the rationalist position that I have always upheld; perhaps it is only that I see certain problems in a more comprehensive way now.

In any case I am increasingly convinced of what I wrote several years ago in the "Introduction to Boullée": that in order to study the irrational it is necessary somehow to take up a rational position as observer.

Otherwise, observation—and eventually participation—give way to disorder.

The slogan of my entry in the competition for the Trieste Regional Office was taken from the title of a collection of poems by Umberto Saba; *Trieste e una Donna* (Trieste and a Woman). By this reference to one of the greatest modern European poets I attempted to suggest both the autobiographical quality of Saba's poetry and my own childhood associations of Trieste and Venice, as well as the singular character of the city that brings together Italian, Slav, and Austrian traditions.

My two years in Zurich had a great influence upon this project in terms of precise architectonic images: the idea of a great glazed cupola (*Lichtthof*) such as the one at Zurich University by [Kolo] Moser or that of the *Kunsthaus*. I have combined the concept of a

public building with this idea of a large, centrally illuminated space; the public building, like the Roman bath or gymnasium, is represented by a central space; here, in fact, three large central spaces related to one another, above which are the corridors of the upper storeys that lead to the offices.

The large spaces can either be divided or used as a single area for general assemblies; they are indoor plazas. Each is lit through large panes of glass recalling those I referred to in Zurich.

An important feature is the raised stone platform. This actually exists and represents the foundations of the old Austrian railway depots. It has been modified only by the openings through which one is able to enter a series of spaces occupying the lower level of the building.

I retained this basement level as a good way of expressing the physical continuity between old and new: by the texture of the stone; its color; and the perspective of the street running along the sea.

This project is closely related to that for the students' hostel made at about the same time, which represents a link between the design for Casa Bay, of which I shall speak more at length, and the Gallarate block.

From Gallarate it borrows the typology of rectilinear volumes with outside corridors, containing the students' living quarters, while with Casa Bay it shares the relationship with a sharply sloping site. The blocks of students' rooms are enclosed within an open framework of steel galleries linked at various points, and the whole building may be seen as an elevated construction anchored to the ground. The factory-like blocks are joined to a social services building (dining room, bar, reading and study rooms, etc.) standing on the level ground at the head of the site and connected with the residential wings by a T-shaped bridge.

The social services building is also developed on a centralized plan, the focus of which is a large open space with various rooms arranged above; the central room functions as the dining and assembly hall. It, too, is lit from above like the Regional Office Building. This steeply pitched roof of glass points toward the foot of the hill and, as can be seen from the drawings, is the focal point of the entire complex.

The use of light materials and, in particular, the contrast between steel and glass—combined in a way that emphasizes their technological or engineering qualities—and other materials suggestive of masonry (stone, plaster, and reinforced concrete) is expressed with clarity, and the design is restated by means of its specific relation with nature. The preference for light materials and open structural work corresponds to the space over the slope, like a bridge in other words, while the heavy part reposes directly on solid ground.

In a way this sort of contrast was already introduced in the design for a pedestrian bridge at the XIIIth Triennale (1963), in which the metal bridge enclosed in transparent steel netting contrasted with the static mass of the piers echoing the arcade behind. This same netting reappears in the housing at Gallarate. The project for a bridge at Bellinzona in Switzerland followed a similar development; this was part of the overall scheme for the restoration of the castle, carried out by Reichlin and Reinhart, and the bridge was intended to connect the upper part of the fortifications with the part situated near the river passing over the via Sempione.

In that design the two concrete supports, that would probably have been varnished, were supposed to resemble the gray stone of the castle walls and the bridge was once more covered in metallic netting.

By means of such examples, I hope to be able to illustrate the problem of new building in historic town centers and the relationship between old and new architecture in general. I believe that this relation, or bond as it can be understood in the broader sense, is most satisfactorily expressed through the careful use of contrasting materials and forms, and not through adaptation or imitation.

But the same principles serve as an introduction to the contrasting relationship with nature pursued in the house at Borgo Ticino (Casa Bay).

I have a special fondness for this design because it seems to express a fortunate condition. Perhaps it is the fact of living suspended in mid-air among the trees of the forest, or the similarity to those riverbank constructions, including even fishermen's shacks, which for functional reasons but also owing to the basic repetition of their form remind us of prehistoric lake dwellings.

The typological image of the building is of elements growing along the slope but forming an independent horizontal line above it, the relationship to the earth being shown only by the varying height of the supports.

The architectural elements are like bridges suspended in space. The suspension or aerial construction allows the house an existence within the forest at its most secret and unattainable point amongst the branches of the trees.

The windows in each room open at the same level as the branches themselves, and viewed from certain parts of the house (the entry, the hall, and the bedrooms) the relation between earth, sky, and trees is unique.

The positioning of the building in the natural environment operates in this unusual fashion not because the building imitates or mimics nature but rather by the fact of being superimposed, almost as an addition to nature itself (trees, earth, sky, meadow).

† [Actually situated in Vicenza.—Trans.]

†† [The playing board consists of sixty-three divisions painted in a spiral, each ninth space depicting a goose.—Trans.]

INTRODUCTION

Thoughts About My Recent Work Aldo Rossi

Aldo Rossi discusses some of his projects in this companion piece to the preceding essay, "An Analogical Architecture." Both appeared in the Japanese magazine *Architecture and Urbanism* as part of a special feature on Rossi's work. Architect, educator, and theorist, Rossi also worked as an editor beginning in 1955, while still a student, at *Casabella Continuità*.

In the mid 1960s, Rossi translated, edited, and introduced Étienne-Louis Boullée's *Architecture: Essai sur l'art* for an Italian audience. His personal connection with the architecture of the Enlightenment is evident in his pursuit of the timeless, rational, and universal in design. The neorationalism of Rossi and the *Tendenza* group seeks to establish a continuity with the history of Italian architecture through an emphasis on the essence of architecture, or the internal aspects of the discipline.¹ The notion of a self-referential, autonomous architectural discipline is fundamental to understanding this movement, which recognizes the limitations of architecture's ability to promote social change. It is nonetheless considered possible for architecture to comment on or critique modern architecture. The Modern Movement's doctrine of functionalism, which considered form to be *determined* by function, is thus targeted by neorationalism.

The neorationalist return to typology is part of a larger postmodern critique emphasizing a continuous history (symbolized by the existence of *a priori* types) in lieu of modernist historicism. (ch. 4, 5) For Rossi, type is also a rejection of modern eclecticism and individual expressionism. Furthermore, type is not bound to function, as much as it is associated with an inventory of ideal forms with meanings resonant in "the collective memory." Rossi's recognition of the social significance of architecture takes the place of more overt connections to the political realm. The essay makes a plea for the significance of the general (societal) over the personal:

I consider that the assumptions contained in a building—technological, architectural, and typological—can offer a solution capable of generalization. In comparison, the repetition of characteristic personal architectural features has no special validity and correspondingly little interest.

Has Rossi managed to avoid the assertion of personality or style, which seems to be his stated intention for architecture? Does his use of simple forms constitute what Roland Barthes might call "degree zero" architecture?²

- 1 Rossi was responsible for organizing the XV Milan Triennale in 1973, entitled "Architettura Razionale," in which the work of the neorationalists was profiled.
- 2 Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968).

ALDO ROSSI

THOUGHTS ABOUT MY RECENT WORK

These projects were designed between 1969 and 1973; until now, only some of them have been built and none is well known, even in Italy, except the housing at Gallarate and the project for the city hall competition at Muggiò.

I think there is little more to be said here about the building at Gallarate: it has been reproduced in reviews all over the world, with positive or negative comments, even copied or imitated, so that the image it has acquired is almost independent from the physical reality of the project as it was built. However, I believe that what I wrote about the design in 1970, when it was published in *Lotus* 7 is still true. I insisted then on a typology of linear galleries in contrast with the enclosed courtyard spaces used in the San Rocco scheme. Nevertheless, I must admit that the autonomy of the image and the reactions it has evoked has enriched the design even in my own eyes. Unfortunately, the photos published here show the building still not lived in and scarcely even finished. Only very recently, walking in front of it, I saw the first open windows, some laundry hung out over the balustrades to dry...those first shy hints of the life it will take on when fully inhabited. I am convinced that the spaces intended for daily use—the front portico, the open corridors meant to function as streets, the perches—will cast into relief, as it were, the dense flow of everyday life, emphasizing the deep popular roots of this kind of residential architecture. For this “big house” might be set alongside the Naviglio in Milan or any other canal in Lombardy.

Quite different to that tenement typology with its open corridors are the one-family houses at Broni with their paired entrances. With balconies, small gardens, and a characteristic curved roof, these houses are conceived as a single terrace in the main street

From *Architecture and Urbanism* 65 (May 1976): 83. Translated by David Stewart. Courtesy of the author and publisher.

of a new municipal housing scheme. The area has, in fact, been planned around this large central street which connects the new development with the old village center. Here the one-family house typology enabled me to create a long, low building overlooked by the hill and the vineyard behind. The semi-circular roofs interrupted by the sections of white wall that separate each pair of dwellings lead the eye across the Po River to the countryside in the direction of Pavia.

I also enlarged and restored an old school building at Broni. The building, which only became a school at the end of the last century, possesses an attractive Umbertine[†] façade, but the hall, the main stairway, and courtyard have been completely rebuilt. This work, despite its small scale, is particularly important because of the meaning my work assumes through direct confrontation with the old building. Most of all I tried, from the very first, to stress the contrast between two separate bodies, one taking form inside the other. By retaining the small courtyard, I was able to emphasize its vertical elements expressed in the portico on the ground floor and covered gallery above; these elements form a partial screen through which the yellow of the Umbertine courtyard façade is visible. Thus, both internal and external surfaces are revealed without being entirely separated. In the hall I tried to make the best use of the available space by lighting the central stairs from the courtyard; as a result, light is diffused and penetrates the entire hall. The outer wall of this staircase also provides the backdrop for the small court, emphasized by the large central window and triangular fountain.

The life of the edifice has already fused the two bodies, the old and new, into a single—yet, slightly ambiguous—whole. It now seems as if my intervention might have been a suggestion for viewing the entire building in a new way. The same method can serve as an approach to the conservation of ancient buildings and the renovation of historical town centers. In such cases, each new addition, however independent in its conception, exists physically within a pre-determined context. Not only is this context different in formal terms but also it has its own dimension in time, which must be taken into account whenever the context is to be modified. To proceed by any other method in a work of "restoration" can only signify destruction with all the sadness that destruction brings. The recent tendency toward environmental improvements, preservation, maintaining old façades—a sort of false embalming process—leads to the eventual decomposition of both architecture and townscape. Finally, I think that the importance of the school project at Broni—as I was saying at the beginning—lies precisely in the kind of associations that developed in the course of the work itself and, therefore, in the extension of the theme in new and unforeseen directions.

In the Fagnano Olona school a series of elements, which in the other projects had been divided, reunited, and approached in linear terms by means of a street, a bridge, a wall...were organized around a central court. The resulting enclosed square became the basic form of the building. This square is composed of two levels connected by a wide flight of steps with the gymnasium above. As in the central section of the project for the Modena Cemetery a skeletal image emerges from the plan. I cannot make out how much this design will be apparent to a person inside the school itself but certainly all the main elements, including the conical chimney, can be seen from the enclosure at the center. I have always imagined this central space a red color: it can be lined with either brick

tiles or porphyry. Moreover, the walls of the courtyard will have the same large cross-mullioned windows that characterize the external façade.

There is certainly a marked connection between this project and that for the Muggiò city hall competition; in a sense the Fagnano project reorders the central space of the Muggiò building. This competition offered an occasion to combine different historical elements: the palatial blocks in the town center, a neoclassical villa standing to one side, and the park behind. It may be that the attempt to put them all together in a single project has brought into play a new sense of topography stressed by the diagonal arms of the city hall at the center.

Finally, any statement of the relationship between new buildings and the pre-existing configuration of the town and its architecture is more than a mere correlation between different qualities and quantities. (The attempt to discover that relationship in external facts stems from a mechanical point of view.) Any such statement to be capable of affording a solution to more general problems, must be generated from within the project according to the limits of the theme developed. This is a task for the architect as well as the critic; in the projects shown here it has been the main consideration and fundamental objective, even though each project in its final form may have been influenced by other factors of a personal nature.

This point is important for the purposes of the present discussion and essential for the development of an eventual teaching approach. Therefore, as I was saying about Gallarate at the beginning, I consider that the assumptions contained in a building—technological, architectural, and typological—can offer a solution capable of generalization. In comparison, the repetition of characteristic personal architectural features has no special validity and correspondingly little interest. Such values are mainly of concern to the historian. Nevertheless, it is difficult for the architect to determine *a priori* whether any given formal relationship offers a chance for further creative development or whether a repeated feature may acquire unforeseen significance.

† [Umbertino refers to the architectural style—corresponding to Victorian or Meiji—practiced during the late nineteenth century in Italy during the reign of Umberto I of Savoy.—Trans.]

INTRODUCTION

Problems in the Form of a Conclusion *Manfredo Tafuri*

This essay was published as the final chapter of Manfredo Tafuri's book, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, in which he situates the crisis of modern architecture in the failure of its ideology. Tafuri was a neo-Marxist theorist and member of the "School of Venice." He was educated at the architecture school in Rome, where he was greatly influenced by Giulio Carlo Argan. (ch. 5) In 1968, the year of the student revolutions in Europe, Tafuri founded the Institute of Architectural History within the Architectural Institute of the University of Venice (IAUV); he directed the history department until his death in 1994. A contribution to the critique of the Modern Movement, *Architecture and Utopia* looks rather pessimistically at the possible roles for architecture and the theorist.

Fundamental to Tafuri's view of the history of architecture is a Marxist suspicion of ideologies (systems of legitimizing and naturalizing beliefs), which mask the operation of capitalism. Tafuri attributes the crisis that architecture experienced in the late 1960s to the ineffectiveness of the modernist ideology in coping with economic realities. Like Diana Agrest (ch. 2, 13), Tafuri defines his task as follows:

ideological criticism is to do away with
impotent and ineffectual myths, which so
often serve as illusions that permit the survival
of anachronistic "hopes in design."

Having undertaken a coherent Marxist "demystification of reality," Tafuri finds that modern architecture attempted to solve problems beyond the scope of the discipline. This idea is common to numerous postmodern views, especially with regard to architecture's elaborate program for the large-scale improvement of society. Diane Ghirardo has pointed out that the failure of modernism's overly ambitious agenda is used by some postmodernists to justify a retreat from social engagement to formalism. (ch. 8) Tafuri would thus seem to be advocating a narrow definition of

architectural problems. To this extent, his theory directly opposes Robert Venturi in *Complexity and Contradiction*, who maintains that modern architecture achieved a (boring) purity of expression by excluding many legitimate architectural problems from its purview. (ch. 1)

Tafuri's extreme skepticism about the possibility of a critical ("class") architecture, or even of an *image* for a "class architecture," prevents him from prescribing a specific methodology for architectural activity. Many architects and theorists included in this anthology would find it very difficult to work within the restricted definition of architecture which Tafuri implies. For example, the interdisciplinarity and intertextuality of Bernard Tschumi's work (ch. 3, 13), and Philip Bess's effort to revive ethical positions (ch. 8) would fall outside Tafuri's scope. And yet, Tafuri would not accept descriptive criticism as adequate. Aldo Rossi's image "L'architecture assassinée" accompanies the text, which suggests that Rossi thinks Tafuri's disciplinary limits will be the death of architecture rather than its solution. In his essay "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," Frederic Jameson responds to Tafuri's pessimism with the idea of "enclave theory," a localized resistance to capitalist optimization.¹

Tafuri and his colleagues at the IAUUV, including collaborator Francesco Dal Co, have been influenced by Walter Benjamin and other Frankfurt School members, and have disseminated the latter's ideas to the architectural community.

1 Frederic Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 51-87.

MANFREDO TAFURI

PROBLEMS IN THE FORM OF A CONCLUSION

It is certainly not easy, however, to integrate the aforementioned useful criticism with a type of designing that deliberately flees confrontation with the most pressing problems of the present situation.

Undeniably, we are here faced with various concomitant phenomena. On the one hand, building production taken as an element of comprehensive planning continues to reduce the usefulness of architectural ideology. On the other hand, economic and social contradictions, which explode in an always more accelerated way within urban agglomerations, seem to halt capitalist reorganization. Faced with the rationalization of the urban order, present-day political-economic forces demonstrate that they are not interested in finding the ways and means to carry out the tasks indicated by the architectural ideologies of the Modern Movement.

In other words, the ineffectiveness of ideology is clear. Urban approximations and the ideologies of the plan appear as old idols, to be sold off to collectors of antique relics.

Faced with the phenomenon of capital's direct management of land, the "radical" opposition (including portions of the working class) has avoided a confrontation with the highest levels attained by capitalist development. It has instead inherited the ideologies which capital used in the first phases of its development, but has since rejected. In this way it mistakes secondary contradictions for primary and fundamental ones.

The difficulty of the struggle for urban legislation, for the reorganization of building activity, and for urban renewal, has created the illusion that the fight for planning could in itself constitute an objective of the class struggle.

From *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, Barbara Luigia La Penta, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), 170-182. Courtesy of the publisher.



Aldo Rossi, "L'architecture assassinée," hand-painted etching, 1975. M. Tafuri, Rome.

And the problem is not even that of opposing bad plans with good ones. If, however, this were done with the cunning of the lamb, so to speak, it could lead to an understanding of the factors conditioning the structures of the plan that in each case correspond with the contingent objectives of the working class. This means that giving up the dream of a "new world" arising from the realization of the principle of Reason become the Plan involves no "renunciation." The recognition of the uselessness of outworn instruments is only a first necessary step, bearing in mind the ever-present risk of intellectuals taking up missions and ideologies disposed of by capital in the course of their rationalization.¹

It is clear, however, that any struggle whatsoever on the part of the working class over the urban and regional structure must today reckon with programs of great complexity. This is true even when that complexity is due to the contradictions within the economic cycle as a whole, as in the case of the processes presently apparent in the area of building activity. Beyond the criticism of ideology there exists the "partisan" analysis of such a reality, in which it is always necessary to recognize the hidden tendencies, the real objectives of contradictory strategies, and the interests connecting apparently independent economic areas. It seems to me that, for an architectural culture that would accept such a terrain of operations, there exists a task yet to be initiated. This task lies in putting the working class, as organized in its parties and unions, face to face with the highest levels achieved by the dynamics of capitalist development, and relating particular moments to general designs.

But to do that it is necessary to recognize, even in the area of planning techniques, the new phenomena and new participant forces.

I have mentioned earlier the crisis, in the disciplines related to programming, of what we might define as the ideology of *equilibrium*. It is, on the one hand, the history of the Soviet five-year plans and, on the other, the teachings of post-Keynesian economic theories which sanction this crisis.² Even equilibrium is seen to be an unfeasible idol when applied to the dynamics of a given region. Indeed the present efforts to make equilibriums work, to connect crisis and development, technological revolution, and radical changes of the organic composition of capital, are simply impossible. To aim at the pacific equilibration of the city and its territory is not an alternative solution, but merely an anachronism.

The analytic models and the prognostications of the localization of productive centers prepared from the thirties up to today, by [Paul Oskar] Kristeller, [August] Lösch, [Jan] Tinbergen, [Dieter] Bos, etc., should be judged, not so much for their specific insufficiencies or with ideological criteria, but rather for the economic hypothesis they presuppose. Significant indeed is the ever-growing interest in [Evgenii Alekseevich] Preobrazensky, a Soviet theorist of the Twenties. Increasingly clear is the role Preobrazensky played as forerunner of a theory of the plan based explicitly on dynamic development, on organized disequilibrium, on interventions that presuppose a continual revolution of mass production.³

It should be observed, however, that programming in individual areas—also for the closed circle that is formed between the technique of intervention and its particular ends—has for the most part up to today operated on the basis of eminently static models, following a strategy based on the elimination of disequilibriums. The change from the use of static models to the creation of dynamic models seems to be the task posed

today by the necessity of capitalist development to update its programming techniques.

Instead of simply reflecting a "moment" of development, the plan now takes on the form of a new political institution.⁴

It is in this way that interdisciplinary exchange pure and simple—a failure even at the practical level—is to be radically surpassed.

Horst Rittel has clearly demonstrated the implications of the insertion of "decision theory" into self-programming cybernetic systems. (And it is logical to take for granted that such a level of rationalization still in large part represents a utopian model.) Rittel has written:

Systems of values can no longer be considered established for long periods. What can be wanted depends on what can be made possible, and what must be made possible depends on what is wanted. Ends and functions of utility are not independent measures. They have a relationship of implication in the decisional ambit. Representations of value are controllable within broad limits. Faced with the uncertainty of future alternative developments, it is absurd to wish to construct rigid decisional models that furnish strategies over long periods.⁵

Decision theory must assure the flexibility of the "systems that make decisions." It is clear that the problem is here no longer purely that of the criteria of value. The question to which an advanced level of programming must respond is, "What systems of values are generally coherent and guarantee the possibility of adaptation and therefore of survival?"⁶

For Rittel it is thus the very structure of the plan that generates its systems of evaluation. All opposition between plan and "value" falls away, precisely as recognized in Max Bense's lucid theorizing.⁷

The consequences of such phenomena, here barely touched upon, for the structure of planning and for the organization of designing, constitute a still completely open problem. It is, however, a problem which must be faced today and in regard to which didactic experimentation must take a position.

Viewed in this light, what remains of the role played historically by architecture? Up to what point does architecture's immersion in these processes render it a pure economic factor? And to what extent are decisions taken in its own specific sphere reflected in larger systems? The present-day situation in architecture makes it difficult to find coherent answers to these questions.

The fact is that, for architects, the discovery of their decline as active ideologists, the awareness of the enormous technological possibilities available for rationalizing cities and territories, coupled with the daily spectacle of their waste, and the fact that specific design methods become outdated even before it is possible to verify their underlying hypotheses in reality, all create an atmosphere of anxiety. And ominously present on the horizon is the worst of the evils: the decline of the architect's "professional" status and his introduction into programs where the ideological role of architecture is minimal.

This new professional situation is already a reality in countries of advanced capitalism. The fact that it is feared by architects and warded off with the most neurotic formal and ideological contortions is only an indication of the political backwardness of this group of intellectuals.

Architects, after having ideologically anticipated the iron-clad law of the plan, are now incapable of understanding historically the road travelled; and thus they rebel at the extreme consequences of the processes they helped set in motion. What is worse, they attempt pathetic "ethical" relaunchings of modern architecture, assigning to it political tasks adapted solely to temporarily placating preoccupations as abstract as they are unjustifiable.

Instead, there is a truth that must be recognized. That is that the entire cycle of modern architecture and of the new systems of visual communication came into being; developed, and entered into crisis as an enormous attempt—the last to be made by the great bourgeois artistic culture—to resolve, on the always more outdated level of ideology, the imbalances, contradictions, and retardations characteristic of the capitalist reorganization of the world market and productive development.

Order and disorder, understood in this way, no longer oppose each other. Seen in the light of their real historical significance there is no contradiction between Constructivism and the "art of protest"; between the rationalization of building production and the subjectivism of abstract expressionism or the irony of pop art; between capitalist plan and urban chaos; between the ideology of planning and the "poetry of the object."

By this standard, the fate of capitalist society is not at all extraneous to architectural design. The ideology of design is just as essential to the integration of modern capitalism in all the structures and suprastructures of human existence, as is the illusion of being able to oppose that design with instruments of a different type of designing, or of a radical "antidesign."

It is even possible that there exist many specific tasks for architecture. What is of greater interest to us here is to inquire how it is possible that up to now Marxist-inspired culture has, with a care and insistence that it could better employ elsewhere, guiltily denied or covered up a simple truth. This truth is, that just as there cannot exist a class political economy, but only a class criticism of political economy, so too there cannot be founded a class aesthetic, art, or architecture, but only a class criticism of the aesthetic, of art, of architecture, of the city itself.

A coherent Marxist criticism of the ideology of architecture and urbanism could not but demystify the contingent and historical realities, devoid of objectivity and universality, that are hidden behind the unifying terms of art, architecture, and city. It would likewise recognize the new levels attained by capitalist development, with which recognitions the class movements should be confronted.

First among the intellectual illusions to be done away with is that which, by means of the image alone, tries to anticipate the conditions of an architecture "for a liberated society." Who proposes such a slogan avoids asking himself if, its obvious utopianism aside, this objective is pursuable without a revolution of architectural language, method, and structure which goes far beyond simple subjective will or the simple updating of a syntax.

Modern architecture has marked out its own fate by making itself, within an autonomous political strategy, the bearer of ideals of rationalization by which the working class is affected only in the second instance. The historical inevitability of this phenomenon can be recognized. But having been so, it is no longer possible to hide the ultimate reality which renders uselessly painful the choices of architects desperately attached to disciplinary ideologies.

"Uselessly painful" because it is useless to struggle for escape when completely enclosed and confined without an exit. Indeed, the crisis of modern architecture is not the result of "tiredness" or "dissipation." It is rather a crisis of the ideological function of architecture. The "fall" of modern art is the final testimony of bourgeois ambiguity, torn between "positive" objectives and the pitiless self-exploration of its own objective commercialization. No "salvation" is any longer to be found within it: neither wandering restlessly in labyrinths of images so multivalent they end in muteness, nor enclosed in the stubborn silence of geometry content with its own perfection.

For this reason it is useless to propose purely architectural alternatives. The search for an alternative within the structures that condition the very character of architectural design is indeed an obvious contradiction of terms.

Reflection on architecture, inasmuch as it is a criticism of the concrete "realized" ideology of architecture itself, cannot but go beyond this and arrive at a specifically political dimension.

Only at this point—that is after having done away with any disciplinary ideology—is it permissible to take up the subject of the new roles of the technician, of the organizer of building activity, and of the planner, within the compass of the new forms of capitalist development. And thus also to consider the possible tangencies or inevitable contradictions between such a type of technical-intellectual work and the material conditions of the class struggle.

The systematic criticism of the ideologies accompanying the history of capitalist development is therefore but one chapter of such political action. Today, indeed, the principal task of ideological criticism is to do away with impotent and ineffectual myths, which so often serve as illusions that permit the survival of anachronistic "hopes in design."

- 1 In a seminal essay Mario Tronti has written: "We have before us no longer the great abstract syntheses of bourgeois thought, but the cult of the most vulgar empiricism as the practices of capital; no longer the logical system of knowledge, the scientific principles, but a mass without order of historical facts, disconnected experiences, great deeds that no one ever conceived. Science and ideology are again mixed and contradict one another; not, however, in a systematization of ideas for eternity, but in the daily events of the class struggle....All the functional apparatus of bourgeois ideology has been consigned by capital into the hands of the officially recognized working class movement. Capital no longer manages its own ideology; it has it managed by the working class movement....This is why we say that today the criticism of ideology is a task that concerns the working class point of view and that only in a second instance regards capital" (M. Tronti, "Marx, forza lavoro, classe operaia," in *Operai e capitale* [Turin: Einaudi, 1966], 171ff.)
- 2 In regard to the economic history of the USSR in the initial phase of the first five-year plan, see *Contropiano* no. 1 (1971), dedicated entirely to the problems of industrialization in the Soviet Union; in particular, M. Cacciari, "Le teorie dello sviluppo," 3ff, and F. Dal Co, "Sviluppo e localizzazione industriale," 81ff.
- 3 See M. Cacciari, "Le teorie dello sviluppo," op. cit. A systematic study of the theories of Preobrazensky is presently being prepared by M. Cacciari and C. Motta.
- 4 The appeal recently made by Pasquale Saraceno, to go beyond what he calls programs of objectives to programmed action of a general type, falls within that conception of the plan which does away with the schematizations and compartmented theories of planning elaborated between 1950 and 1960. Saraceno writes: "If programming is of a general

character it has in substance the goal—completely different [in respect to the vast projects that cover various given sectors of public action]—of composing into a system all the actions undertaken in the public sphere. Programming thus becomes a procedure providing a means of comparing the costs of all the various proposed governmental undertakings, as well as of comparing the total of such costs to the total foreseeable resources. The adoption of a similar procedure would make it more appropriate to speak of a programmed society than of a programmed economy" (P. Saraceno, *La programmazione negli anni '70* [Milan: Etas Kompass, 1970], 28). It should be noted that Saraceno's "general program" does not at all constitute a binding plan: its only official duty is to make known from time to time probably at intervals not longer than one year—the state of the system." (p. 32) Significant is the request for new institutions capable of realizing the coordination. The positive evaluation of the method followed in the formulation of *Progetto 80* (a report on the economic and urban situation in Italy, and on the possibilities of development by 1980, prepared by a team of economists and town planners in 1968–1969 for the Ministry of Development) confirms the line of thinking adopted. Saraceno asks: "What, in fact, is *Progetto 80*? It is a systematic review of the national problems that at *this* moment are judged of greatest importance, as well as of the new institutions which could better than those existing set in motion the means to a solution of these problems. If our public spheres were already ordered in a *system* in the sense defined above, the authors of that document would have produced what has been termed a "*program-verification*." (p. 52) Despite the fact that even Saraceno's technical prospectives are not without a utopian residue—see his plea for "an ordinance by virtue of which the social forces might morally [sic] adhere to the process of utilization of resources required for the solution of the problems" (p. 26)—his criticism of the five-year plan of 1966–1970 adheres to an institutional transformation of the control of development, correctly singled out in the note by Sandro Mattiuzzi and Stefania Potenza, "Programmazione e piani territoriali: l'esempio del Mezzogiorno," *Contropiano* no. 3 (1969): 685–717. That Saraceno's opinions are part of a vast current restructuring of the practice and theory of programming is proven by the whole series of voices raised in favor of the *plan* as a "continually and completely exercised policy." See G. Ruffolo, "Progetto 80 scelte, impegni, strumenti," *Mondo economico* no. 1 (1969).

- 5 H. Rittel, *Überlegungen zur wissenschaftlichen und politischen Bedeutung der Entscheidungstheorien*, report of the Studiengruppe für Systemforschung, Heidelberg, 29ff, now available in the volume edited by H. Krauch, W. Kunz, and H. Rittel, *Forschungsplanung* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1966), 110–129.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Pasqualotto has written "The various steps followed by Bense in his analysis represent the necessary premise and the very basis of his general conclusions, and at the same time demonstrate the absolute inadequacy of the policy proposed by Benjamin to the reality of technological integration. The chain of processes which constitute the radical formalization of the elements and structures, of the value and judgments that belong to the area of aesthetics and that of ethics, has proved to be completely functional in revealing the technical intentionality (*technische Bewusstseins*) which represents its foundation. In turn, that technical intentionality presents itself as the determining factor in the construction of a "new subjectivity," which works for the final goal of a "new synthesis": the thread of technical intentionality which weaves its way through the technological civilization ends in *integration*. But the realization of this integration evidently does not depend solely on the organic character of an ideology of technology but, rather, in large part on the elaboration of a policy of technology." (G. Pasqualotto, *Avanguardia e tecnologia*, 234–235.)