

A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

Published for The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies

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Spring 1978: 12

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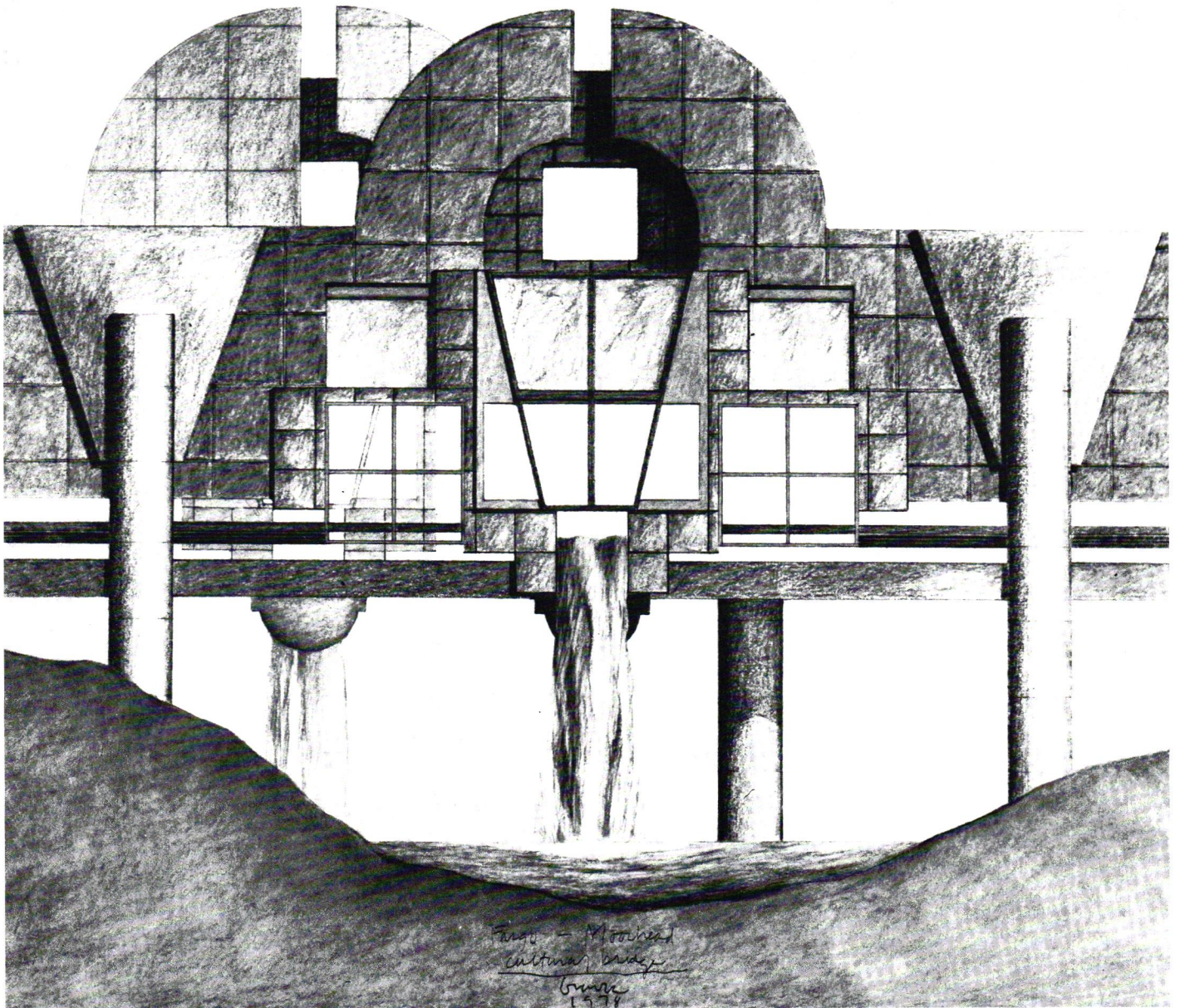
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Alan Colquhoun

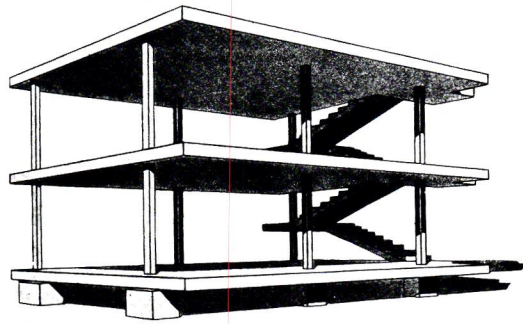


1 (frontispiece) Fargo-Moorhead
Cultural Center Bridge, Fargo,
N.D., and Moorhead, Minn.
Michael Graves, 1977–1978. South
elevation.

- 2 Criticism occupies the no-man's-land between enthusiasm and doubt, between poetic sympathy and analysis. Its purpose is not, except in rare cases, either to eulogize or condemn, and it can never grasp the essence of the work it discusses. It must try to get behind the work's apparent originality and expose its ideological framework without turning it into a mere tautology.

This applies particularly to the work of Michael Graves, with its appearance of being *sui generis* and its sensitivity to outside influences which it immediately absorbs into its own system. This essay, therefore, will attempt to discuss his work in terms of these broad contexts: the American tradition, the tradition of modern architecture, and the classical tradition. It is not suggested that a discussion of his work in these terms exhausts its meaning. It merely provides a rough and ready scaffold—a way of approaching the work obliquely.

Graves's work is so clearly related to the international Modern Movement that it is at first sight difficult to see in it any reference to purely American traditions. But some of the ways in which it differs (and differs profoundly) from European interpretations of the Modern Movement seem to be traceable to specifically American sources. Graves's apparent rejection of modern architecture as a social instrument—and his insistence that architecture communicates with individuals and not classes—does not operate in a social void. His work is made possible by social conditions which are probably unique to the United States at the present moment (though they existed in Europe between 1890 and 1930). The chief of these is the existence of a type of client (whether institutional or private) which regards the architect not only as a technician who can solve functional problems, or satisfy a more or less pre-formulated and predictable set of desires, but also as an arbiter of taste. In this role he is called upon not only to decide matters of decorum; like the modern painter, he is expected to say something 'new', to propound a philosophy. No doubt this only applies to a minority of clients (and even these are probably often puzzled at the results), but their very existence explains how



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an architect as intensely 'private' as Michael Graves can insert himself within the institutionalized framework of society despite the absence of a clearly defined 'market'. If his work reflects a nostalgia for 'culture' which is characteristically American, and which, as Manfredo Tafuri has pointed out,¹ can be traced back at least to the City Beautiful movement, it depends on the existence of a type of client who has similar—though less well defined—aspirations. In Europe the critique of a materialistic modern architecture has usually taken place under the banner of a betrayed populism. It is perhaps only in America that it could be launched in the name of intellectual culture. Certainly the importance in Graves's work of the French tradition—its assimilation, initially through the example of Le Corbusier, of the Beaux Arts discipline of the plan, has its origins in a purely American tradition going back to Richardson and McKim.

But there also exists a technological condition peculiar to the United States which seems especially favorable to Graves's architecture and which is related to the social, insofar as it depends on the fact that most of his commissions are for private houses or additions. This is the balloon frame—a system of construction whose lightness and adaptability gives the designer great freedom and allows him to treat structural matters in an ad hoc way. Without this form of construction an architectural language like that of Graves, which depends on a blurring of the distinction between what is real and what is virtual, and between structure and ornament, would hardly be conceivable. By using a system of construction which provides so few constraints, Graves is able to treat structure as a pure 'idea'. The regular grid, for example, which is such an important ingredient of his work, is relieved of those positivistic and utilitarian qualities which it had for Le Corbusier (e.g. in the Maison Domino, fig. 2). For Graves structure has become a pure metaphor, and he thus reverses the postulates of the Modern Movement, in which the split between perception and calculation resulted in an emphasis on instrumentality.

The openness and transparency of Graves's houses are made possible by the use of the frame, while their com-

2 *Maison Dom-ino*, Le Corbusier
and Pierre Jeanneret, 1914.

3 *Snyderman House*, Fort Wayne,
Indiana. Michael Graves, 1972.
Axonomic.

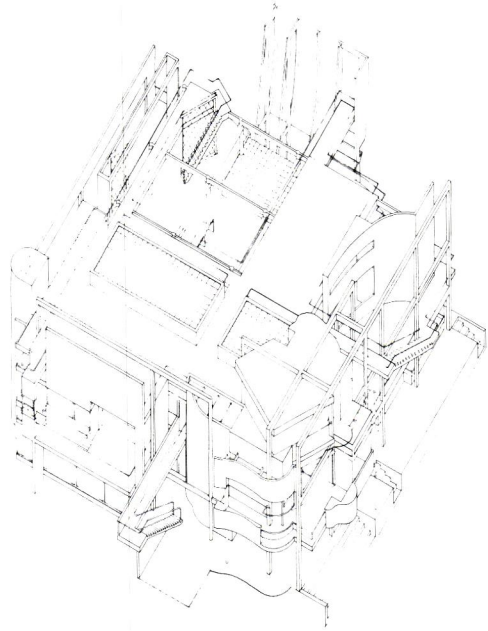
4 *Drezner House*, Princeton, New
Jersey. Michael Graves, 1970.
Ground floor plan.

plexity and ambiguity are made possible by the fact that the frame can be manipulated at will. These are qualities which his work shares with the Shingle Style, even more than with its Shavian counterpart, and seem characteristic of later nineteenth century American domestic architecture. In Europe the houses of the Modern Movement were relatively box-like. The Neo-Plasticist projects of Van Doesburg and Mies van der Rohe were the exception, and it is these projects, as Vincent Scully has pointed out, which have such a striking resemblance to the houses of Frank Lloyd Wright, with their hovering planes and strong vertical accents. If the houses of Graves also have closer ties with Neo-Plasticism than with the more typical houses of the European movement, it may be that, as in the case of Wright, there is a coincidence between Cubist spatial principles and an American tradition which, in its response to climate, in its attitude toward nature, and in a certain kind of sociability, creates an intermediate zone between the private realm of the house and the public realm of its environment. Not only the openness of the nineteenth century American house, but also the proliferation of verandahs, porches, and bay windows, and the frequent placing of these on the diagonal suggest a parallel with the way Graves weaves secondary spaces in and out of the periphery of the cage, or superimposes a diagonal fragment on an otherwise orthogonal *parti* (figs. 3, 4).

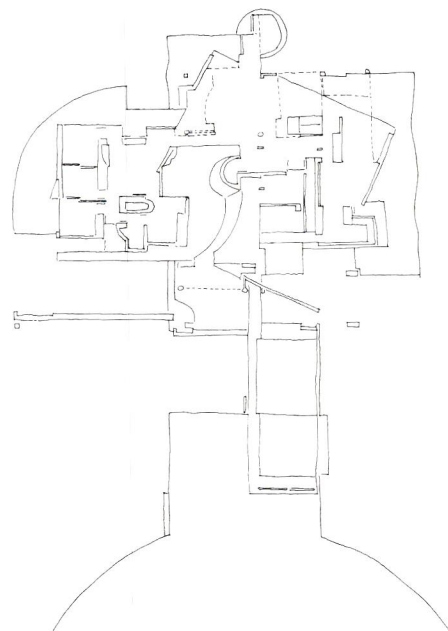
All this is perhaps to say no more than that the picturesque nineteenth century house is a precursor of a modern architecture which combines Cubist devices with an anecdotal and episodic elaboration of the program. This should surprise us no more than similar connections in the other arts, for instance the fact that modern music took over from romantic music its rejection of classical symmetry and classical cadence.

In the context of contemporary American architecture, there are two figures with whom one is tempted to compare Graves.

Among the architects of the New York Five, with whom Graves has become associated, it is Peter Eisenman with whom he seems to have the greatest affinity. In the mid-



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5 *Plan types. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, 1910–1929.*

6 *Casa del Fascio, Como, Italy. Giuseppe Terragni, 1932–1936.*

7 *Sant'Elia Nursery School, Como. G. Terragni, 1936–1937.*

8 *Mural cartoon, examining room, Ear, Nose and Throat Associates, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, 1971.*

4 sixties, when they worked together on a competition for a site located on the upper west side of Manhattan, they both shared the same influences—notably that of the Como School—and attempted to construct a new architectural language out of the basic vocabulary of the Modern Movement. But from the start they diverged—Eisenman toward a syntactic language of exclusion, Graves toward a language of allusion and metaphor. This semantic inclusiveness has led Graves to direct historical quotation, which now puts his work at the opposite pole from that of Eisenman. But in the work of both one finds an architecture in which the ideal completely dominates the pragmatic. It is true that Graves—in contrast to Eisenman—starts from the practical program, the distribution of living spaces. But these quotidian considerations are merely a point of departure; they are immediately ritualized and turned into symbols—for example, the ritual of entry. With Eisenman the semantic dimension is conceptual and mathematical; with Graves it is sensuous and metaphysical.

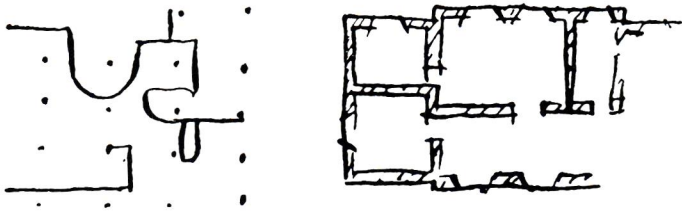
Graves's later work might seem to bear some resemblance to (and even the imprint of) the work of Robert Venturi, with his parodistic use of traditional motifs. But this similarity is superficial. Graves shows no interest in what seems to be Venturi's chief concern: the problem of communication in modern democratic societies, and of 'architecture as mass medium'. If Venturi wants to bridge the gap between 'pop music and Vivaldi', Graves remains exclusively a 'serious' composer, for whom the possibility of communication is predicated on the existence—even in a fragmentary form—of a tradition of high architecture. This no doubt explains Venturi's preference for the romantic and populist overtones of vernacular architecture, as against that of Graves for the architecture of the classical and academic traditions.

Though the degree of dependence of Graves's work on American traditions is perhaps arguable, its affiliations with the Modern Movement are beyond dispute. The nostalgic quality of these affiliations has been stressed by other critics, but it should not be forgotten that Graves belongs to a generation for whom the Modern Movement

still represented all that was vital and creative in architecture. To return to the 1920's and Le Corbusier was not an eclectic choice but a return to sources. What was new about this return was its rejection of functionalism and its claim that architecture had never exploited the formal and semantic possibilities of modernism as the other arts had. There was also the conviction that the 'new tradition' of avant-garde art constituted a historical development from which it was impossible to turn back.

It is certainly true that the development of the avant-garde marks a radical break with the form of artistic language which existed until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Traditionally, language was always thought of as describing something outside itself, in the 'real' world. The difference between natural language (considered as an instrument rather than a poetics) and artistic languages was merely that in the latter the form was an integral part of the message—the 'how' was as important as the 'what'. At whatever date we put the moment when the epistemological foundations of this 'rhetorical' world began to disintegrate, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, and in the context of avant-garde art, that the content of a work began to become indistinguishable from its form. External reality was no longer seen as a *donnée* with its own preordained meanings, but a series of fragments, essentially enigmatic, whose meanings depended on how they were formally related or juxtaposed by the artist.

In modern architecture this process took the form of demolishing the traditional meanings associated with function. But these were replaced by another set of functional meanings, and architecture was still seen in terms of a functional program which was translated, as directly as possible, into forms. In the work of both Graves and Eisenman, this linear relation between content and form has been rejected. Function has been absorbed into form. 'Functional' meanings still exist, but they no longer constitute a prior condition to derive their nourishment from a pragmatic level of operation. They are reconstructed on the basis of the building as a pure work of art, with its own internally consistent laws.



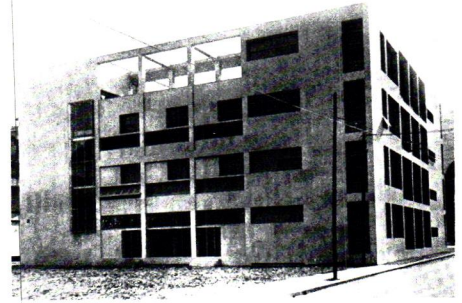
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By returning to the sources of modern architecture Graves attempted to open up a seam which had never been fully exploited, as it had been in Cubist painting. In his work, the elements of *techné* and those of architecture (windows, walls, columns) are isolated and recombined in a way which allows new metonymic and metaphoric interpretations to be made. At the same time rhythms, symmetries, perspectives, and diminutions are exploited in a way which suggests the need, in discussing his work, for a descriptive vocabulary such as existed in the Beaux Arts tradition, and still exists in musical criticism, but which is generally lacking in modern architectural discourse.

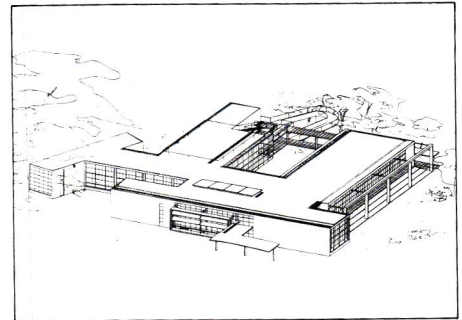
Within this process no semantic distinction exists between functions and forms. They reinforce each other to produce meanings which extend in an unbroken chain from the most habitual and redundant to the most complex and information-laden. To respond to Michael Graves's architecture it is essential to understand the 'reduction' which is involved in such a process, for it is this which makes his work specifically 'modern'. It involves the dismantling of the preconceptions which would allow one to have a ready-made idea of what a 'house' is, and insists that the observer or user carry out a reconstruction of the object. Graves's elementarism is related both to the architecture of the Modern Movement and to modern art in general. It is tied to an elementarization resulting from industrialization and the disappearance of craft, and it strives for the condition of the *tabula rasa*, the primal statement.

The reconstruction of the object, made necessary by this process of analysis and reduction, involves the use of codes which are themselves meaningful and internally coherent. But what interests Graves is not the way in which these syntactically organized and semantically loaded elements already form a system whose meaning has been ideologically internalized. For him all the elements must be reduced to the same condition of 'raw material'. They have become de-historicized and 'potential', and must be reconstructed consciously as a 'structure'. He is interested in how such a structure works perceptually as the product of conflicts and tensions in the psyche of the individual. He demonstrates the *process* by which meanings are gen-

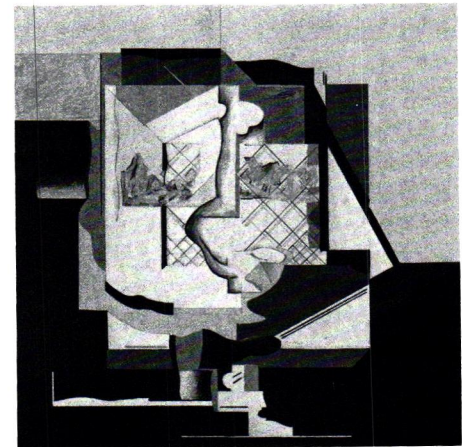
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6 erated, and this leads him to a language whose articulation depends on oppositions, fragmentation, and the visual pun.

In this process of reduction Graves does not attempt (as Peter Eisenman does) to strip the elements of their connotations. Columns, openings, spaces all retain their qualities of body image and the meanings which have accumulated around them. Not only do the basic architectonic elements have meanings which relate to their functions, but their very isolation allows them to become metaphors. There is, indeed, a danger that these metaphors may remain private and incommunicable, and in his earlier work this danger is increased because of the reliance on relatively abstract forms. Where meanings are clear in his earlier work, they tend to be those which have already become established in modern architecture.

The most fundamental source of Graves's work (and it is this which links him with the other members of the so-called New York Five) is Le Corbusier. In Le Corbusier's work there is always a tension between the figurations and symmetries of the French classical tradition and the infinite improvisations which are demanded by modern life and which are made possible by the neutral grid (fig. 5). It is this tension which Graves exploits. But he superimposes on this Corbusian system—whose chief vehicle is the 'free plan'—an open three-dimensional cage which was seldom used by Le Corbusier. The vertical planes of Graves's work are closely related to the work of Giuseppe Terragni—to such buildings as the *Casa del Fascio* and the *Asile Infantile* at Como (figs. 6, 7), with their open structural cage, their delicate layering of structural planes, and their frequent absorption of the frame within the wall surface. The transparency of the cage enables Graves to provide an adumbration of the building's limits without destroying the flow of space between inside and outside. The dialectic between solid and planar elements and the structural grid becomes a basic architectural theme, not only in plan but as perceived in three dimensions, and dominates the whole plastic organization in a way which it seldom does in the work of Le Corbusier.

Apart from these purely architectural sources, Graves's work is directly related to Cubist and Purist painting. His work as a painter is closer to his architecture than Le Corbusier's was to his. For Le Corbusier painting provided a lyrical outlet to some extent constrained by the logical and systematic researches of the architect, but Graves develops parallel themes in both painting and architecture, among which one finds the typically Cubist notion of a world built out of fragments, related to each other not according to the logic of the perceived world, but according to the laws of pictorial construction. His buildings are, as it were, projections into real three-dimensional space of a shallow pictorial space, and his spaces are frequently made up of planes which create an impression of Renaissance perspective or of successive planes of the Baroque theater.

Although the dominance of the three-dimensional frame suggests, as in Neo-Plasticism, the parity between all three dimensions, in Graves's work the plan is still thought of as possessing figural qualities which actually generate the vertical and spatial configurations, in the manner of Le Corbusier and the Beaux Arts. It is in the development of the plan that the influence of his painting can be felt most strongly. The paintings suggest collages built up out of fragments which create diagonal fault lines or, as if with torn paper, trembling profiles suggestive of the edges of bodies. These elements reappear on his plans and create a nervous interplay of fragmentary planes, a web of countervailing spatial pressures inflected with slow curves or overlaid with diagonal figures (fig. 8).

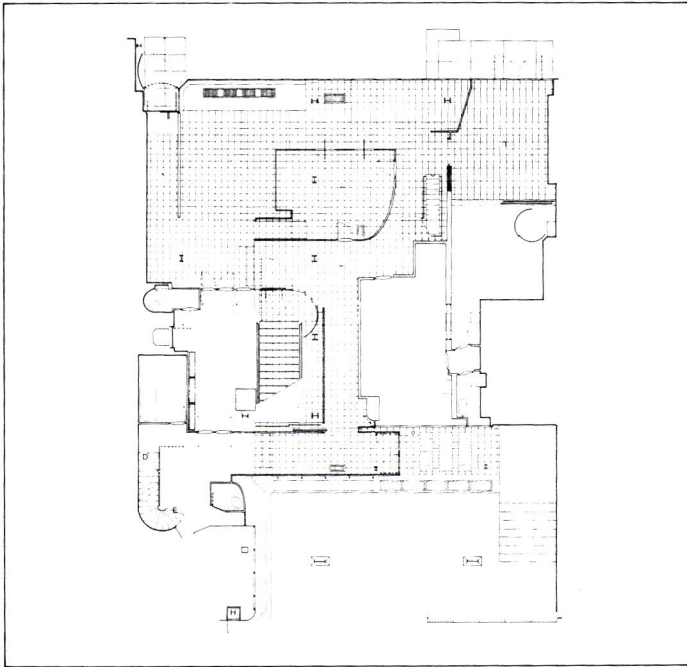
Unlike the plans of Le Corbusier, with their muscular, vertebral sense of order, Graves's plans tend to be dispersed and episodic, and often resemble, perhaps fortuitously, the plan of Chareau's *Maison de Verre*, with its multiple centers, complex spatial subdivisions, and gentle inflections. There is, in Graves's plans, a sense of almost endless elaboration and half-statement, every function being a clue for syntactic complexity or metaphorical qualification (figs. 9, 10).

This elaboration is not arbitrary; it comes from an extreme

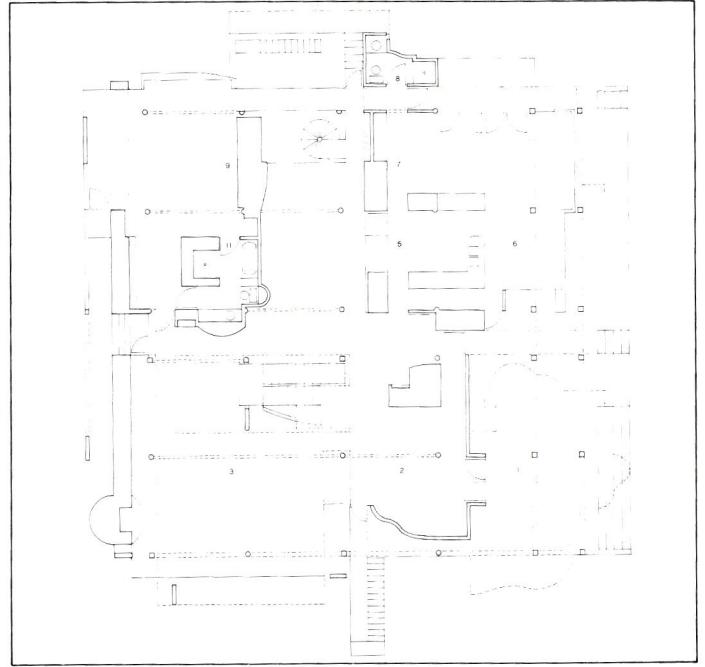
9 *Maison de Verre, Paris. Pierre Chareau with Bernard Bijvoet, 1928-1932. Ground floor plan.*

11 *Hanselmann House, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, 1967. Axonometric.*

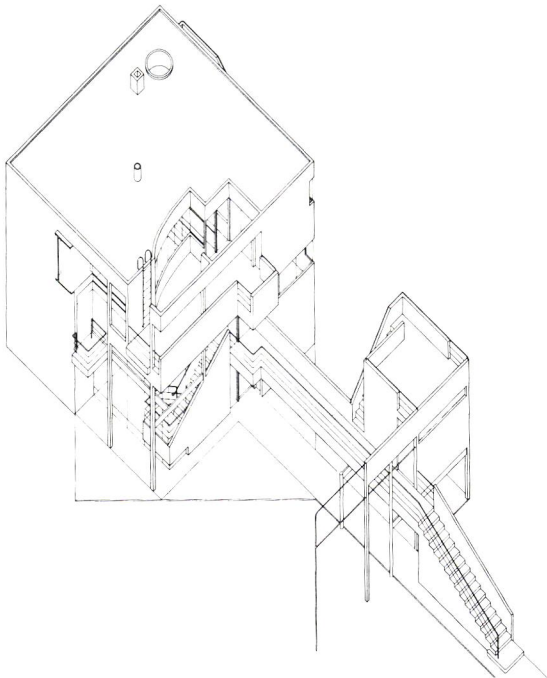
10 *Snyderman House, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, 1972. Ground floor plan.*



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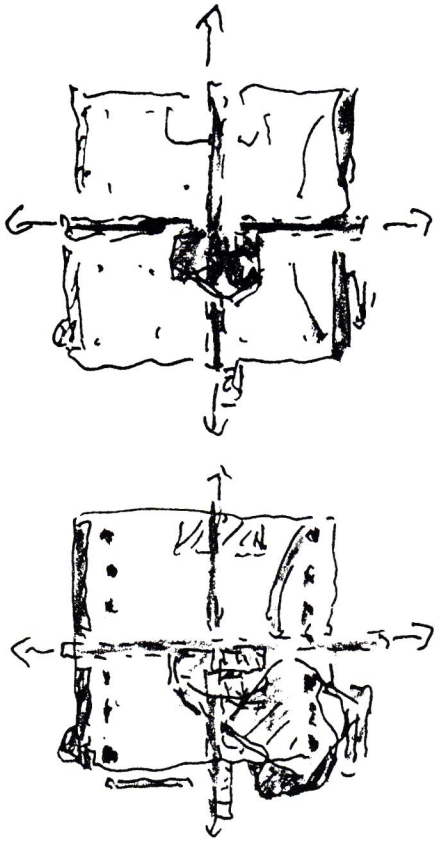
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*12 Snyderman House, Fort Wayne,
Indiana. Michael Graves, 1972.
Parti sketches.*

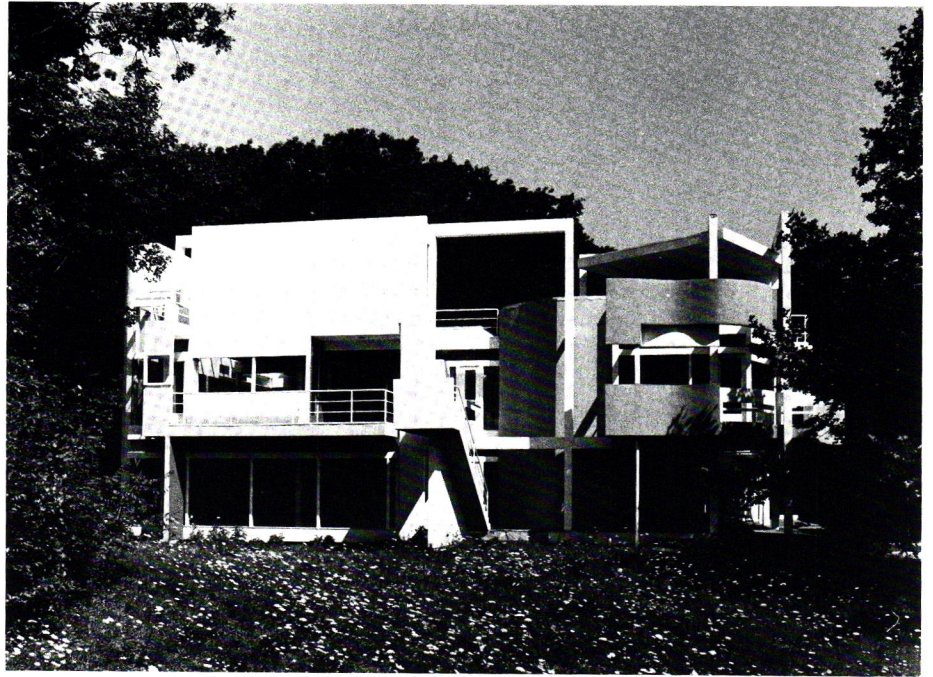
13 South facade.

14 Southwest corner.

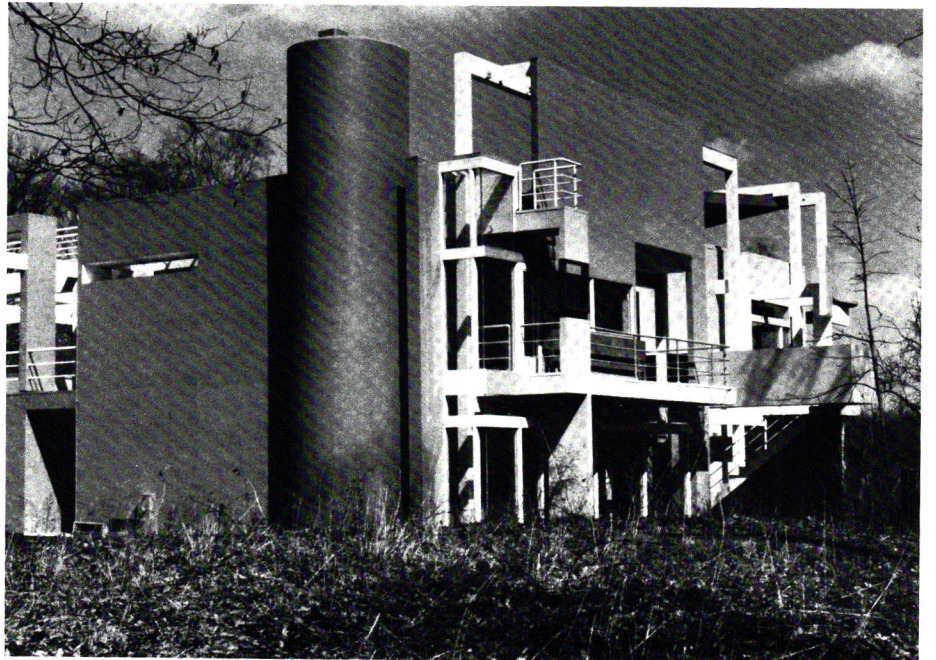
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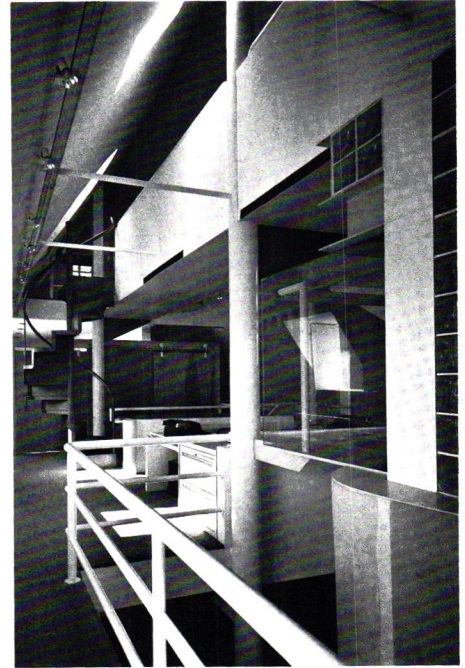
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15 Investment Office, Gunwyn Ventures, Princeton, New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1972. Second floor.

16 Bay window from inside of private office.

sensitivity to context, and this is perhaps its chief difference from the tradition of the Modern Movement, with its attempt to create architectural types of a new order in polemical contrast to the existing built environment. I have said that many of Graves's projects are additions. These additions draw attention to their difference from the existing buildings, but they do not ignore them. The old house is considered as a fragment which it is possible to extend and qualify in a way unforeseen in the original. In the Benacerraf House, for example, the wall separating the original house and the extension is removed, and the cage of the addition penetrates into the living spaces of the existing house to form a transparent veil which transforms the original space and overlays it with a new spatial meaning.

But sensitivity to context is equally apparent in completely new structures. The houses respond to the natural environment, which itself is modified by the building. The more typical houses of the Modern Movement tended to respond to the gross features of the environment (particularly orientation) by setting up elementary oppositions, for example that between an open side which was fully glazed and a closed side which was solid. Graves uses this basic opposition as a compositional point of departure, as can be seen in the Hanselmann House of 1965, where the theme open/closed is almost obsessively stated, and is reinforced by a ritualistic frontalization and a displacement of the front facade to form an additional plane of entry (fig. 11). But in other works, for instance the Snyderman House of 1969, the opposition closed/open is used with greater subtlety, and is qualified by a number of conflicting contextual demands. The 'closed' surface is punctured by a variety of openings, and its function as a limiting plane is actually enhanced by its greater transparency. The way in which this and other diagrammatic expressions of opposition are modified in the design process is illustrated by comparing the sketches for the Snyderman House with the final design. In the early sketches the plan consists of two equal axes at right angles, the east-west axis being bounded on the west by a solid wall punctured by only one opening and on the east by an open surface with fragmentary obstructions (the



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10 plane of entry, fig. 13). As the design progresses these ideas are retained but are overlaid with counter-statements. The west wall becomes a perforated screen (fig. 14). At the same time the east-west axis is strengthened by a caesura in the structural grid, while the north-south axis is suppressed (see fig. 10). A diagonal is introduced by the erosion of the south-east corner (fig. 12) and the skewing of the second floor accommodation—a diagonal which is reinforced by raising the south and east facades to three stories. These moves suggest entry from the south-east corner and act in contrapuntal opposition to the plan's biaxial symmetry. The house is no longer a statement of simple oppositions, but an overlay of several *different* oppositions, each element separately inviting contradictory interpretations.

Other ways in which Graves's buildings differ from more orthodox modern buildings can be seen by analyzing the Gunwyn office conversion at Princeton of 1972. The elements used in this design are those which one might expect to find in a typical 'systems approach' building of the West Coast—tubular steel columns, exposed I-beams, standard lighting tracks, and office furniture. The basic imagery is industrial, efficient, smooth.

But there is another language superimposed on this. Whereas, according to functionalist practice, the systems should be logically independent, Graves (starting, as always, from Le Corbusier's poetic use of mechanical forms but going further into a world of free fantasy) deliberately overlaps them to produce ambiguities which gently subvert their primary and unequivocal meanings, and give rise to less obvious correspondences.

The space of the office is complex, with various penetrations through three stories. A hatch to the second floor office projects over one of these voids. Its wafer-thin work-top is carried on a bracket attached to the column on the *opposite* side of the void, which thus reaches out to receive an unexpected but hardly onerous burden and at the same time provides the hatch with a frame which it has borrowed from the nearby tubular balustrade at floor level (fig. 15). Similar ambiguities are created when

the glass-brick wall to the office is prized open and an I-beam inserted to support its upper half (fig. 16). This I-beam, seen from alongside the office, appears as a jagged fragment mysteriously projecting from a column (see fig. 15). Most of the columns are circular, but when they occur in a wall they turn into pilasters and merge with the wall surface above. All these fragments and transpositions have a local, internal logic of their own. Their shock effect is a result of the way they undermine expected hierarchies. The fragments are differentiated by means of color, for the most part brilliant, but intermixed with grass greens, sky blues and flesh pinks. Just as these colors suggest elements of nature, so does the metaphorical play of functional elements have anthropomorphic, and sometimes surreal, overtones relating mechanical functions to our own bodies, and making us question reality.

Graves's buildings, in the phase of his work most directly influenced by the Modern Movement, consist of a large number of variations on a limited number of themes. The most persistent idea is that of the open frame defining a continuous space partially interrupted by planes and solids. Not only is horizontal space continuous but vertical penetrations occur at crucial points to create three-dimensional continuity. Through this space the frame is threaded, creating a dialectic between a rational *a priori* order and a circumstantial, sensuous, and complex plastic order. This is in essence the 'free plan' of Le Corbusier, but developed with greater complexity in a repetition, transformation, and interweaving of formal themes reminiscent of musical structure. Tensions develop around the periphery of the building, and there is a maximum exploitation, by means of layered screenings and shallow recessions, of the plane of the facade—an intense moment of transition between the 'profane' world outside the house and the 'sacred' world inside.

Graves's work cannot be called 'classical' in any strict sense. But his thought is permeated with a kind of eighteenth century deism, and a belief that architecture is a perennial symbolic language, whose origins lie in nature and our response to nature. He finds support for these

17 Claghorn House, Princeton, New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1974. Dining room wall.



18 Claghorn House. View of addition from garden.



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19 Claghorn House. Porch.

20 Mural cartoon. *Transammonia, Inc., N.Y. Michael Graves, 1974.*

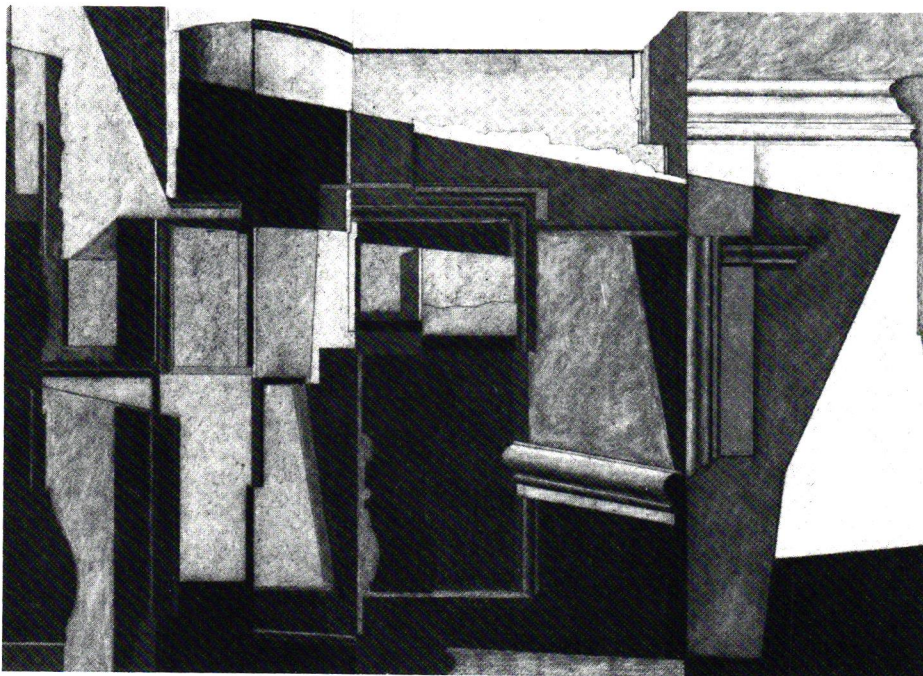
21 *Chem-Fleur Factory, Newark, New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1977. Entrance to office wing.*

22 *Crooks House, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, 1976. Preliminary Study.*

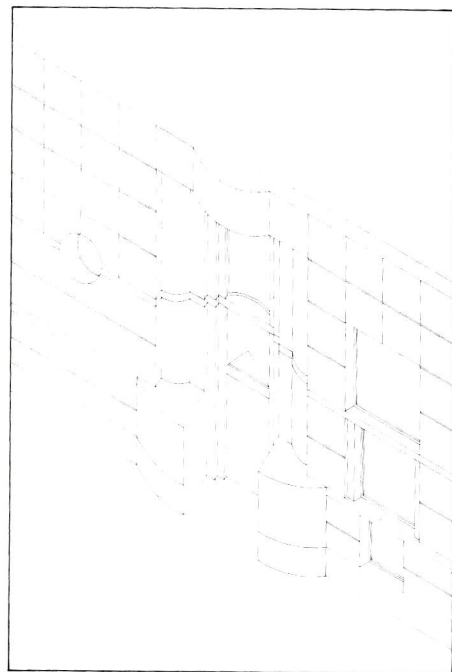
23 *Crooks House. Parti sketch.*

24 *Kalko House, Green Brook, New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1978. Preliminary ground floor plan.*

25 *Crooks House. Axonometric.*



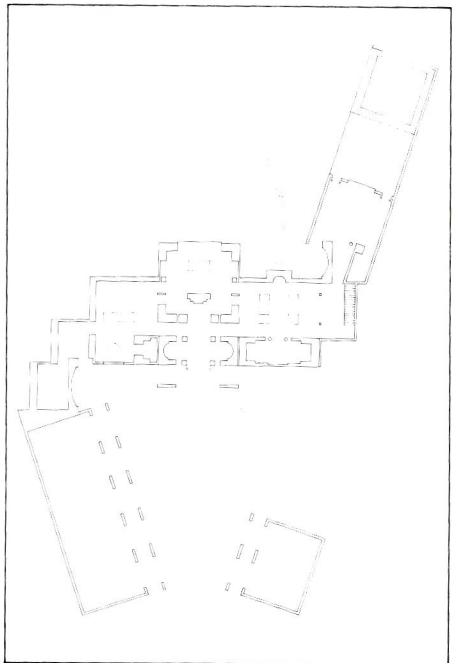
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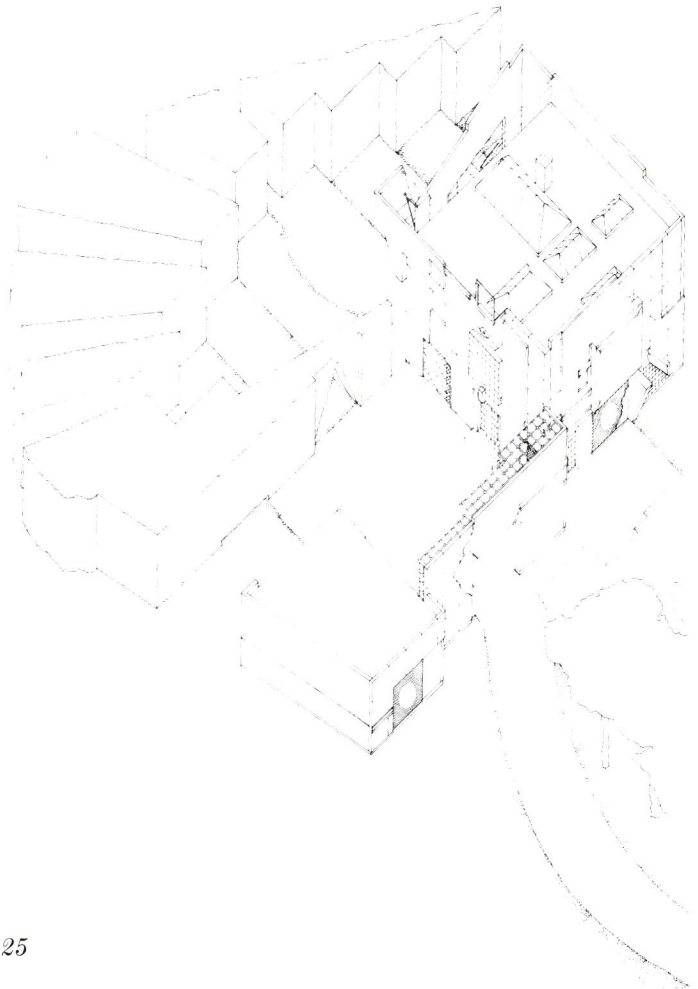


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views in such modern writers as Geoffrey Scott and Mercea Eliade. The frequent use in his writings of the words 'sacred' and 'profane' shows that he regards architecture as a secular religion which is in some sense revelatory.

In his earlier work the symbolic images and metaphors are very generalized and are drawn from a repertoire of abstract forms chiefly derived from Le Corbusier and Terragni. This language is autonomous within an architectural tradition and operates through the use of certain graphic codes, the most important of which is the plan. But during the early 1970's Graves seems to have become dissatisfied with the expressive possibilities of this language and, above all, of the plan as an abstraction, and this dissatisfaction coincides with a radical change of style. The attitude behind it is expressed in the following program notes for a student project: "The design of a guest house addition to an existing villa is given . . . to focus the students' attention on the perceptual elements of a building, the wall surfaces, and the spaces they describe . . . the plan is seen as a conceptual tool, a two-dimensional diagram or notational device, with limited capacity to express the perceptual elements which exist in three-dimensional space."²

Graves's buildings have always laid stress on these 'perceptual elements'—especially on the function of the plane as a method of stratifying space, and as symbolic of the spaces which it defines or conceals. But in his earlier projects the solid and planar elements in themselves were reduced to the degree zero of expressiveness, in accordance with the functionalist precept of minimum interference with the industrial product as 'ready-made'. In his more recent work these elements have begun to be semantically elaborated. They are no longer the minimal ciphers which go to form a rich metonymy; they become overlaid with meanings belonging to the architectural tradition. Columns develop shafts and capitals; openings are qualified with architraves and pediments; wall surfaces become ornamented. A new dimension of purely architectural metaphor is added to the functionalist and natural metaphors of his earlier work.



26 Plocek House, "Keystone House,"
Princeton, New Jersey, Warren,
New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1977-
1978. Street facade, preliminary.

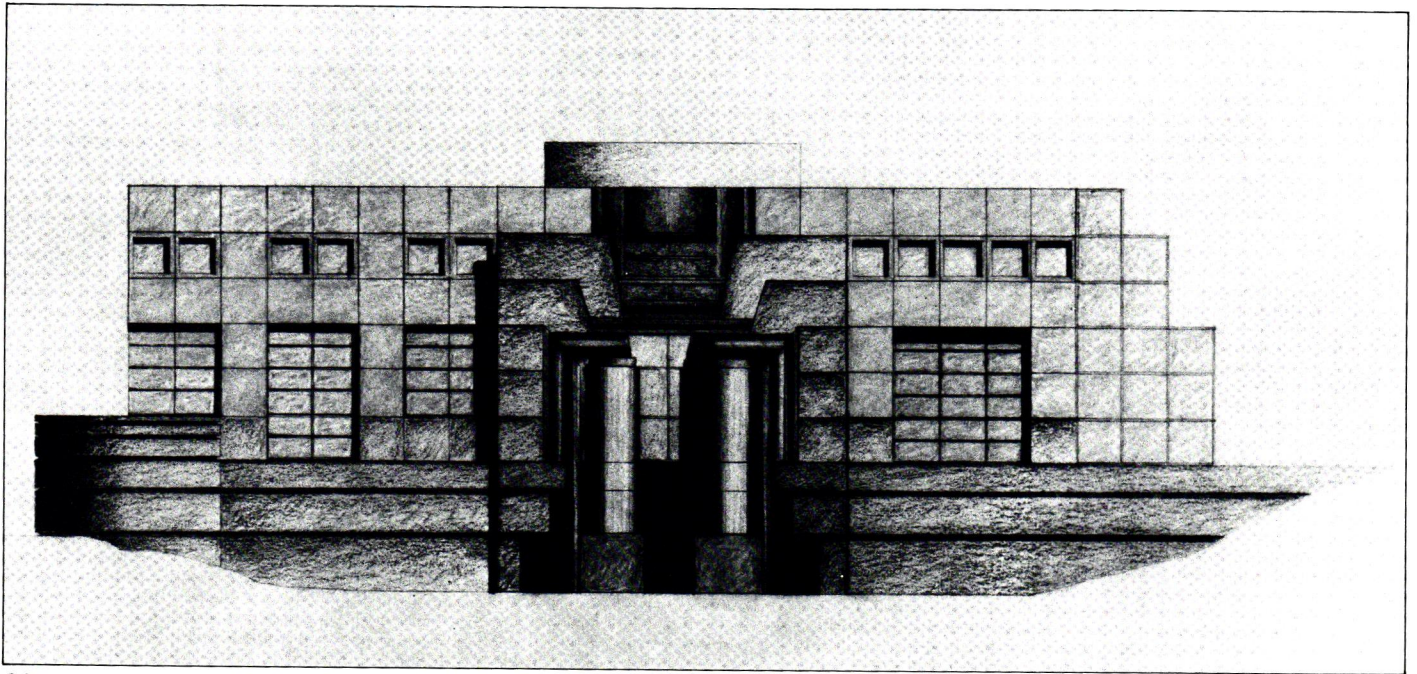
27 Plocek House. Axonometric.

28 Crooks House, Fort Wayne,
Indiana. Michael Graves, 1976.
Model, street facade.

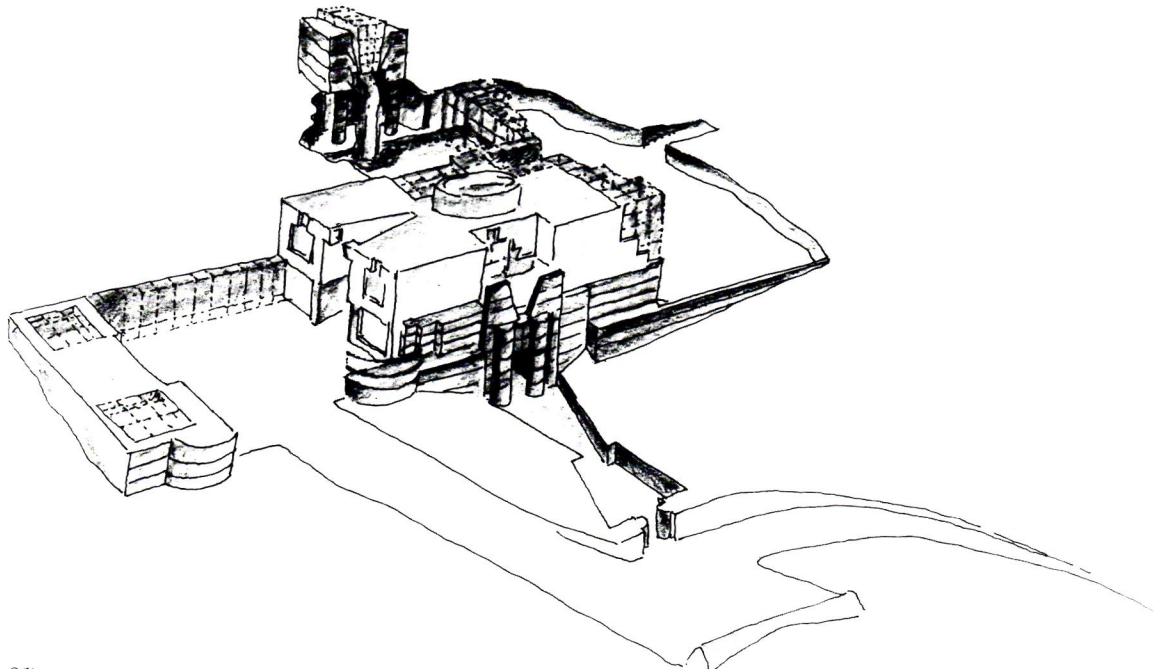
29 Urne à congélations, Porte de la
Saline. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux.

30 Rockefeller House, Pocantico
Hills, New York. Michael Graves,
1969. Axonometric.

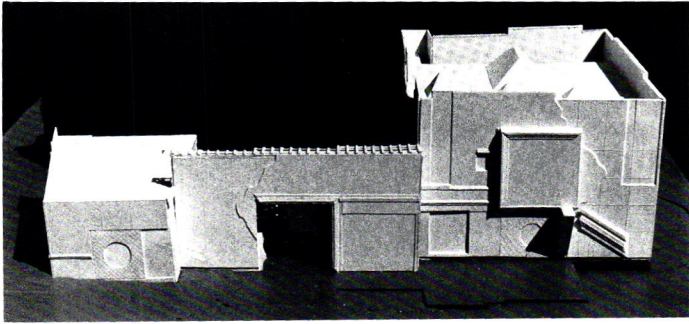
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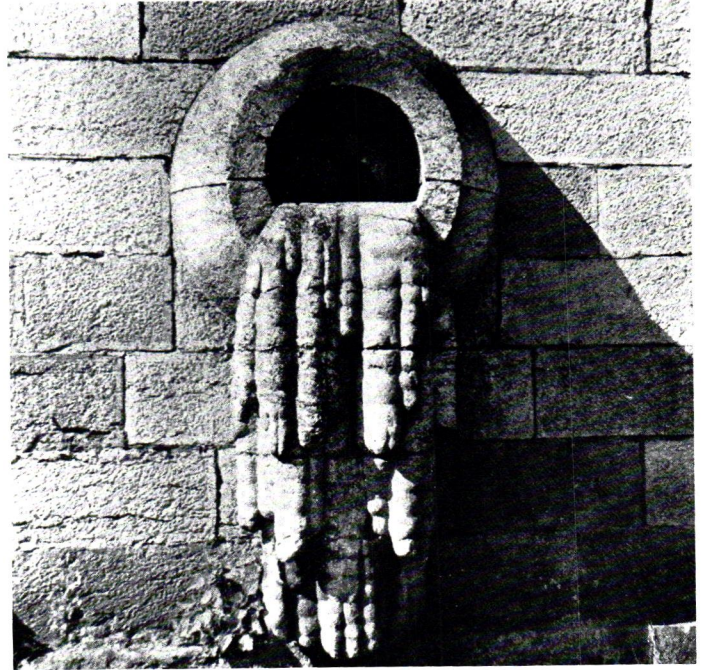


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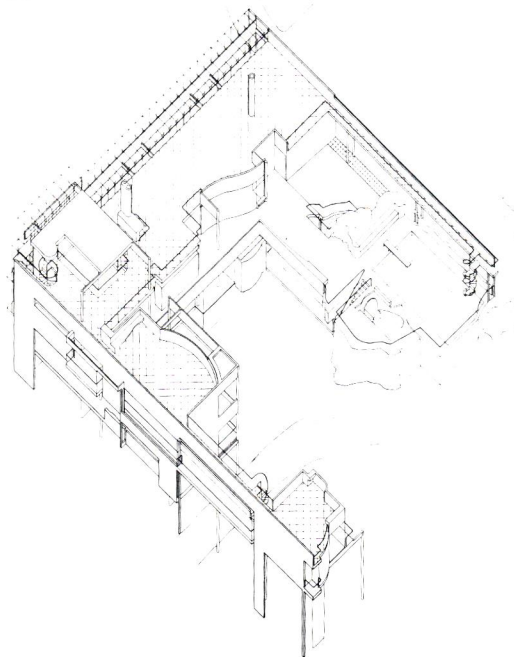
It is possible that these ideas developed initially less from a process of deduction than from particular design problems. The use of figural elements seems, for example, to be connected with his habit of extracting the maximum of meaning from a given context. In the Claghorn House of 1974—which seems a pivotal work—the humble motif of a chair rail with bolection moldings is used as a way of linking the new to the old (fig. 17). This seems to have been suggested by the fact that the existing house had few spatial qualities, but a strong nineteenth century flavor. This carrying through of motifs is similar to the use of the frame in the Benacerraf House. But here the process is reversed. Instead of the new extending its language back into the old, the thematics of the old are re-used in the new. As if in sympathy with this, the outside of the addition has a heavily figural quality, with a broken pediment and a wall trellis, turning what would have been an inconsequential statement into one which is dense with parabolic meanings (figs. 18, 19). At the same time, somber colors echoing the period taste of the old house replace the clear colors of the earlier work.

At about the same time, architraves and other figural elements appear in Graves's paintings, and these underline the fact that the change to a figurative, ornamental architecture has not altered his method of composition, with its dependence on *collage* (fig. 20). It is like the change from analytical to synthetic Cubism. Traditional figures are introduced as quotations and fragments, as were the functionalist motifs of the earlier work. Because these figures already exist in our memory, and because they are ornamental and not structural, they can be transposed, split up, inverted or distorted without losing their original meanings. The chief sources of this 'metalanguage' are Italian Mannerism, eighteenth century 'romantic classicism', and the later Beaux Arts. But in developing a language of ornament which is simple and allows for repetition, Graves has recourse to the language of Art Deco—that 'debased' style which tried to unite the more decorative aspects of Cubism with a remembered tradition of architectural ornament (fig. 21).

In Graves's earlier buildings the fundamental element is



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16 the frame or grid, creating a Cartesian field in which the planes and volumes locate themselves. It is impossible, in such a system, for the wall to develop any density; its function is simply to modulate space (see fig. 10). In his more recent work the wall—or the wall fragment—takes the place of the frame as the main organizing element. Two consequences follow from this. First, the space is no longer continuous but is made up of discrete spatial figures bounded by walls or colonnades. The walls develop thickness, and the negative, solid spaces are read as *poché*. Figural space is seen as carved out of solid mass (fig. 24). During the preliminary stages of the design, the plan is allowed to suggest the spatial composition independently of its three-dimensional consequences; thus, in the Crooks House, the early sketches show no distinction between house walls and garden hedges; according to the code of the plan, they both define space in terms of void and solid, figure and *poché*. But this results in a metaphorical relationship between house and garden; topiary defines internal spaces, whose ‘ceiling’ is the sky (figs. 22, 23). We see here that ambiguity between fully enclosed space and semi-enclosed space which has always been a feature in Graves’s buildings (fig. 25). The second consequence of the new importance given to the wall is that the shallow layering of space in the frontal plane of the building, which was previously created by parallel and separate planes suspended in the cage, is now flattened onto the wall surface itself. The wall becomes a bas-relief with layers of ornament which are built up or peeled away. Fragments of architectural motifs are assembled to create a balanced asymmetrical whole (fig. 28).

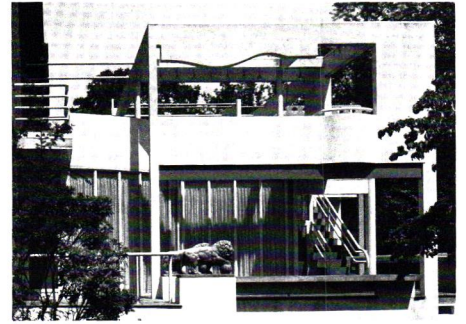
The massive architectural elements which occur on the facade are frequently distorted and transposed. Thus, in the studies for the Plocek House, several simultaneous interpretations of the same figures are invited. The main entry is monumentalized by the presence of two giant columns supporting a flat arch (fig. 26). But this monumentality is subverted by contradictions. The traditional flat arch with voussoirs is established, but subjected to a figure-ground reversal by the removal of the keystone. The expected pyramidal composition is reversed; the center is a void between the masses on either side, which

become a ‘split pair’. The voussoirs are read both in their normal sense as radiating wedges on a flat plane and as the receding lines of a *trompe l’oeil* perspective. The columns are structurally redundant in voussoir construction. Their role as pylons constricting and guarding the entrance is reinforced by the absence of capitals and the insertion of an architrave between them and the arch. Such transformations can be seen as an extension of the Mannerist permutation of a repertoire of figures, whereby two systems of meaning are superimposed, and their paradigmatic relations are stated explicitly in the same object (fig. 27), e.g. in the ‘Gibbs surround’.

In Graves’s earlier work metonymic and metaphoric meanings had to be created by the relationship between elements which were themselves relatively mute. As soon as established architectural figures become the basic counters, relationships are established, not between irreducible forms, but between the semantic contents existing in the figures. His buildings now become *bricolages* of recognizable figures complete with their historical connotations. For example, on the bridge of the Fargo-Moorhead project (see frontispiece), there is an overt reference to Ledoux’s barrel-shaped ‘House for the Director of the river Loue’ in the Saline de Chaux, and this image is conflated with a frozen waterfall reminiscent of the ornamental *urne à congélations* on the main gate (fig. 29). But it is the way in which Ledoux has reduced the classical repertoire to pure geometrical figures which enables his forms to release primary and archetypal sensations. The historical reference by itself is not enough. Graves’s work therefore depends on eighteenth century sensationalist theory, and not on pure historical associations.

Perhaps the most important single aspect of Graves’s work lies in the attitude toward nature which it reflects. There is, in his work, a continual dialectic between architecture as the product of reason, setting itself against nature, and architecture as a metaphor for nature. The drama of this dialectic is played out in the architecture itself (fig. 30). The open structure characteristic of his earlier work allows the virtual space of the building to be penetrated by outside space, and itself frames the natural

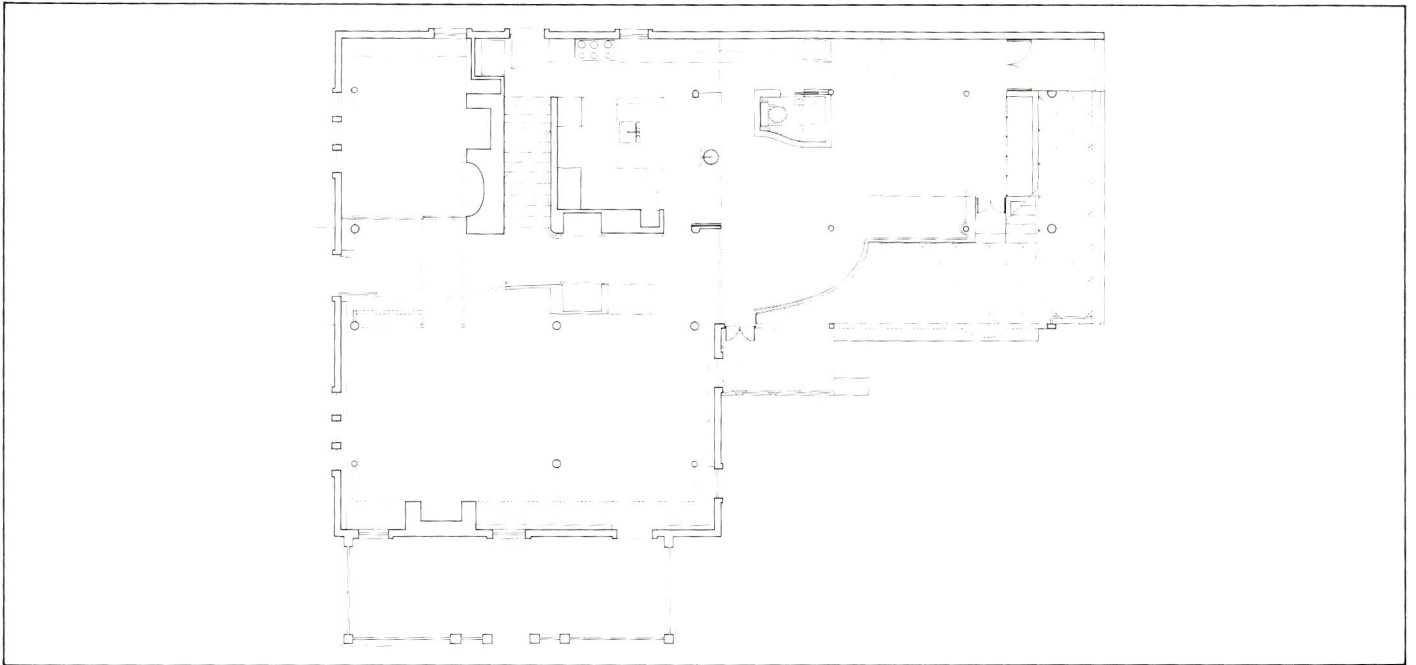
31 Benacerraf House, Princeton,
New Jersey. Michael Graves, 1969.
Garden facade.



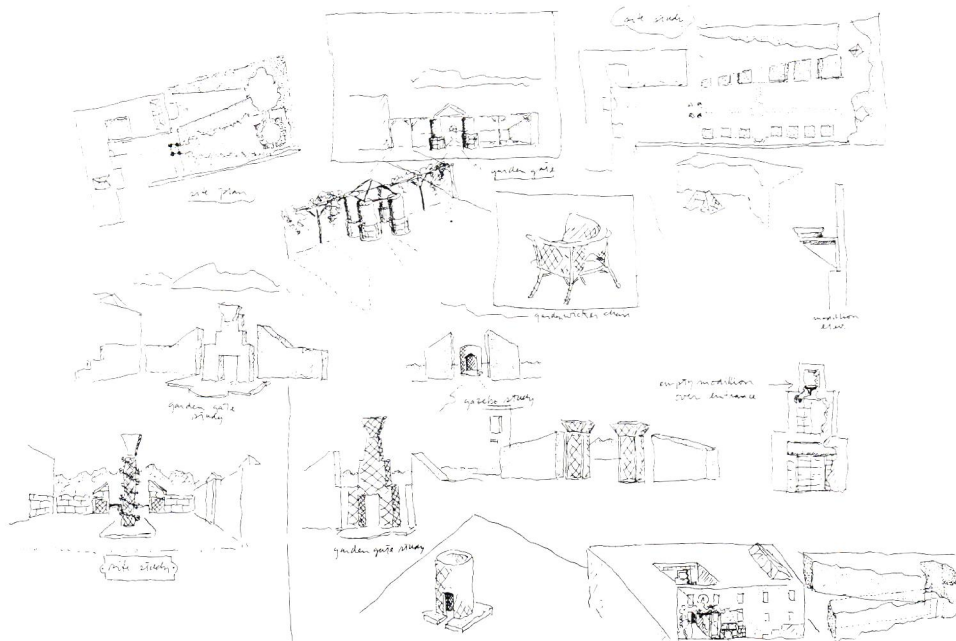
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32 Ground floor plan.

33 Warehouse conversion to private
residence, Princeton, New Jersey.
Michael Graves, 1977. Garden
sketches.



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18 landscape. Thus defined by its structural elements, the building remains incomplete, as if arrested in the process of marking out a habitable space. References to the primitive act of building are filtered through the language of Cubism and advanced technology (itself a metaphor since the actual technology is mostly pre-industrial). The round column, isolated against the sky, suggests the tree as primordial building material; free-form profiles either in plan (fig. 32) or (as in the Benacerraf House) in elevation, suggest the presence of nature within the man-made world of the building (fig. 31). There are references to a domesticated nature, as in the perforated steel beams with their suggestion of pergolas. An all-pervading nature is also evoked by the association of colors with the primary aspects of nature—sky, earth, water, and vegetation. The earlier buildings recall both conservatories and bowers or arbors, which protect man from nature by means of nature's own materials.

In the later work, Graves's classicist preferences are for garden structures (topiary, trellises) or for those architectural motifs which are associated with a mythologized nature—rustication, grottos, cascades, ruins (fig. 33). The fragmentation of the buildings suggests the presence of natural obstacles to conceptual completeness, and the inability of man to establish order in the face of Time and Chance. One has the impression of an arcadia which is not only irretrievable, but also somehow flawed.

These are the qualities which unite the two phases of Michael Graves's work, and which allow him to use the language of Cubism or of the classical tradition to recreate an architecture out of its primordial elements; to offer a new and intense interpretation of architecture itself and of man's cultural predicament in relation to nature.

Graves's work is a meditation on architecture. This is to say much more than it is concerned exclusively with the aesthetic. Such a concern is perfectly compatible with the problem of construction, which, in the case of a Le Corbusier or a Mies, is the *sine qua non* of aesthetic choice and is based on the (aesthetic) principle of economy of

means. With Graves this problem is excluded; architectural meaning withdraws into the realm of 'pure visibility'; the substance of the building does not form a part of the ideal world imagined by the architect. Structure becomes a pure representation. The objective conditions of building and its subjective effect are now finally separated. Architecture is created and sustained in the psyche, and its legitimate boundaries are established by voluntary judgment acting on an imagination nourished by history.

The difference between these two systems of representation, and the different status which they attribute to the 'real', can be seen if we compare two works by an engineer—Gustav Eiffel. The Tower and the Statue of Liberty represent the two poles toward which structure gravitates at the end of the nineteenth century. In the first case structure is the sufficient and necessary condition of meaning; in the second, the structure is purely 'enabling' and plays no part in the object as a sign. So long as one accepts the traditional distinction between sculpture and architecture the paradoxical relation between these two attitudes remains obscured. But it becomes apparent the moment one sees sculpture and architecture as two modes of representation, where meanings are derived either from the traditional subject of sculpture—the human form—or from architecture. Both the human form and its 'house' are perceived as cultural 'traces', not as natural and objective 'referents'. If architecture becomes the subject of representation, this representation necessarily includes the memory of the 'problem' of structure.

This system of representation is the exact opposite of the 'classical' process by which the ephemeral was translated into the durable, according to which durability as such was a value and materiality a symbol of the transcendental. With the instrumentalization of structure, the mythic is re-channeled, and, in the Modern Movement, takes up its abode in instrumentality itself. In the architecture of Michael Graves, the alternative route is taken. The myth becomes pure myth, recognized as such, and the architectural sign floats in the dematerialized world of *Gestalt*, and the de-historicized world of memory and association.

This article was originally written for the monograph Michael Graves (Architectural Monograph 6, ed. David Dunster, and published by Academy Editions, London) and appears here in a modified version with the kind permission of Dr. A. C. Papadakis of Academy Editions, London.

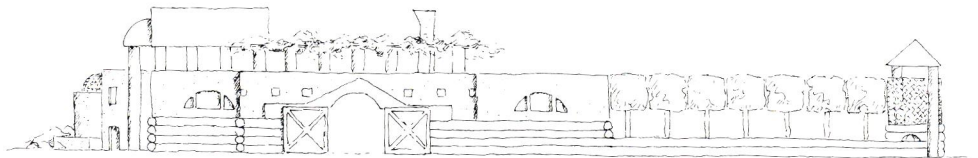
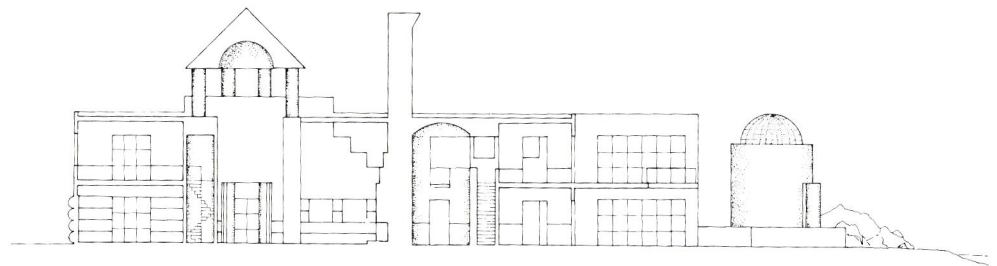
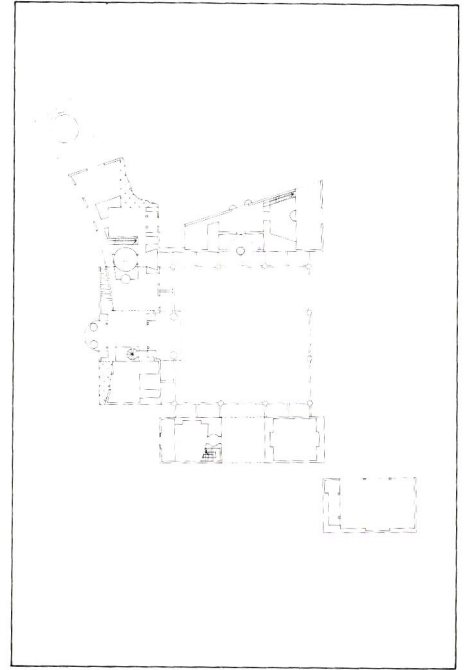
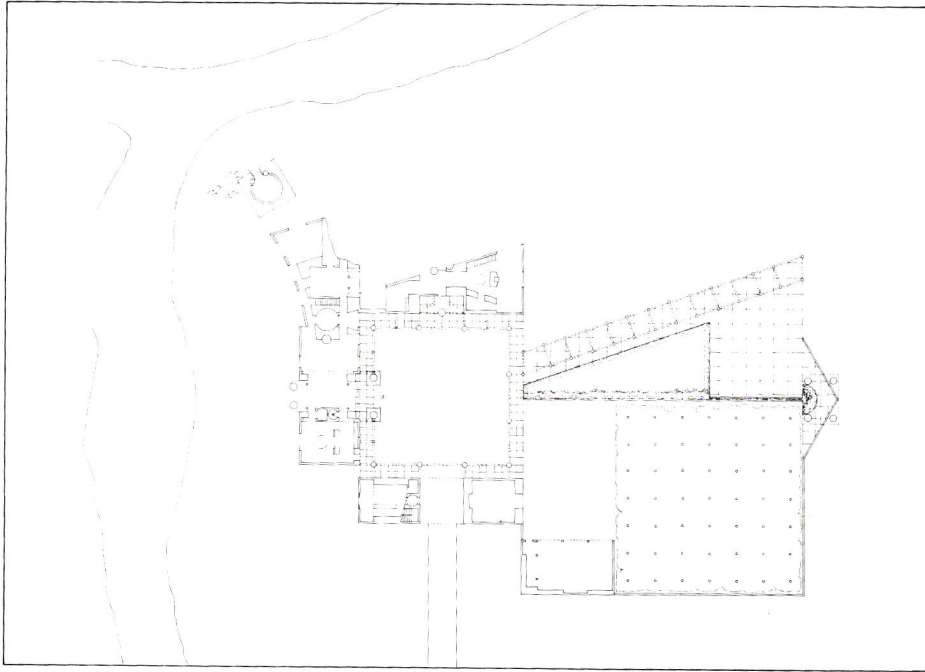
1. Manfredo Tafuri, "'European Graffiti.' Five × Five = Twenty-five," *Oppositions*, 5, Summer 1976.
2. "The Swedish Connection," *Journal of Architectural Education*, September 1975.

Figure Credits

- 1, 3, 4, 8, 10–12, 14, 18–28, 30, 32, 33 Courtesy Michael Graves.
- 2, 5 Reprinted from *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret: Oeuvre Complète de 1910–1929* (Zurich: Les Editions l'Architecture Erlenbach, 1946).
- 6, 7 Courtesy Peter Eisenman.
- 9 Reprinted from *Global Architecture*, 46, 1977.
- 13 Courtesy Michael Graves. Photograph by Yukio Futagawa.
- 15–17 Photographs by Norman McGrath.
- 29 Reprinted from Marcel Raval, *Claude-Nicholas Ledoux, Architecte du Roi, 1736–1806* (Paris, 1945).
- 31 Courtesy Michael Graves. Photography by Laurin McCracken.

*Suite of sketches. House in Aspen,
Colorado. Michael Graves, architect,
1978.*

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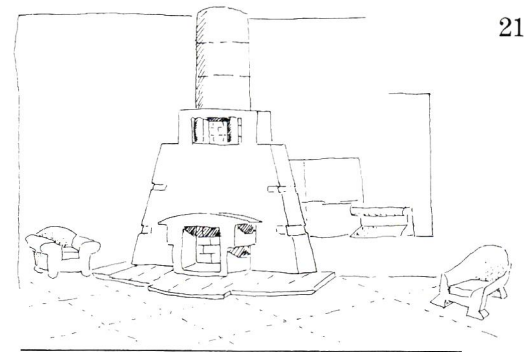
Postscript: The Graves of Modernism

Peter Eisenman

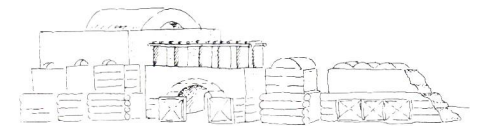
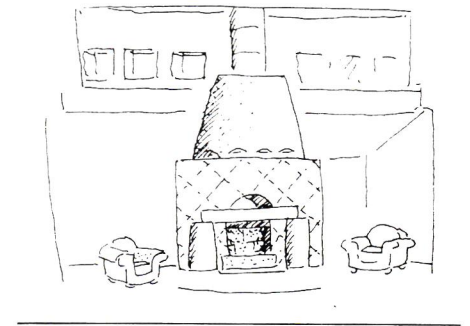
*The responsibility that Colin Rowe unquestionably shares for the revival of interest in Le Corbusier in the early 1960's in America finds a curious counter-thesis in Rowe's own skeptical repudiation of the polemics and principles of the Modern Movement in his 1972 introduction to the book *Five Architects*. For while Rowe may well have succeeded in establishing—to his own evident satisfaction—that the post-Corbusian development represented by this book embraced the physique rather than the morale of the heroic Modern Movement to which it specifically aspired, the rhetorical questions with which he concluded his text can now also be seen as a denunciation of both the Modern Movement itself and its American sub-culture, as well as a decisive step towards the 'post-modern' epoch in which we are now immersed.*

*Given his recent pronouncements, it is not surprising that Rowe should have distanced himself from the *Five*, along with Arthur Drexler, who wrote the preface, on one side, and Philip Johnson, who in a later edition wrote the postscript, on the other. The anti-modern position since embraced by all three speaks for itself. What is surprising is the apparent effect that Rowe's revelation (several years delayed) has had on the recent work of Michael Graves. For among those who enthusiastically espoused the American Corbusian revival in the 1960's, Michael Graves must surely be counted as one of the foremost representatives. And contrary to Rowe's assessment, the early work of Graves did indeed manifest in its notion of the *Zeitgeist*, a nostalgic if perhaps unconscious commitment to both the physique and the morale of the Corbusian imagery.*

The Rowe critique, in its separation of form and content, implies that the forms of modern architecture no longer have (if in fact they ever had) any necessary ideological basis. However, it should be noted that Rowe's interpretation was specifically addressed to modern architecture and the Modern Movement and not to the broader philosophical principles of modernism, and as such it was narrowly focused. It dealt only with one aspect of the modern 'enlightenment', namely the presumption of a programmatic and perhaps positivistic basis to the relationship between form and content—a kind of mechanistic functionalism. This overtly 'ideological' modernism, which rhetorically anticipated technological and social utopia, co-existed however with another modernism, one that Rowe almost completely ignores. He conveniently fails to note that much of the 'modernist' enterprise had to do with work on the language itself: in architecture this meant a conscious reduction of the discourse, an attempt to assert, for example, the 'blank canvas' of the facade. And it must be pointed out that this work on the language was also inherently ideological, but not in a rhetorical sense. It fundamentally changed the relationship



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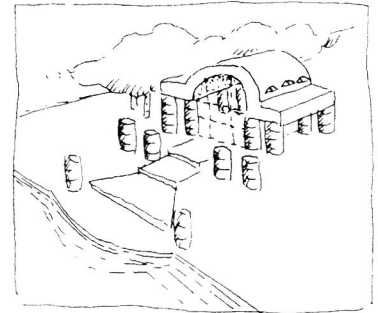


22 *between man and object away from an object whose primary purpose was to speak about man to one which was concerned with its own objecthood.*

It is then not entirely surprising that one of Rowe's followers, Alan Colquhoun, should have directed the foregoing essay to diminishing the extent of Graves's ideological commitment to both modern architecture and the modernism of his early work. For both Rowe and Colquhoun share the ambivalence of English pragmatism toward the ironic sensibility of southern Europe, which, particularly when the latter is fused with nineteenth century Germanic philosophy, comes to represent that phenomenon of modernism to which we refer here. And it is precisely to this notion of modernism that the early work of Michael Graves seems fundamentally addressed. By locating Graves's work in the context of an American tradition which allegedly never had a vision of architecture as a social movement, Colquhoun (like Rowe) is able to avoid the question of modernist ideology entirely, allowing him to assess the Corbusian work of Graves as devoid of social content. It obviously suits Colquhoun's argument to endorse Rowe's distinction between morale and physique. And his appeal to the Americanism of Graves's work tends to support a reading of Rowe's introduction as nothing more than an innocuous commentary on a historical development rather than as a potentially corrosive polemic.

But in as much as modernism itself can be said to contain these two ideological components, Colquhoun's argument conceals the difference between the early work, which seemed to contain at least one aspect of this modernism, and a more traditional formalism in his later work, which seems to contain neither.

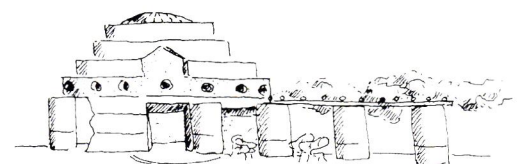
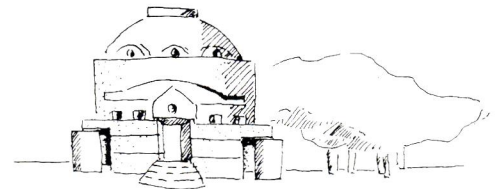
Colquhoun rightly points out that in this early work meanings "are reconstructed on the basis of the building as a pure work of art, with its own internally consistent laws . . . It strives for the condition of the tabula rasa, the primal statement." Thus Colquhoun suggests that all elements are reduced to the same condition of raw material; they are dehistoricized in order to be reconstituted as 'structure'. However he attempts to see what could be called a modernist internalization as the first stage of an 'evolution' in Graves's work toward the point where the content of a work becomes indistinguishable from its form. Denying the presence of an ideological dimension in Graves's modernism, he can then see this 'evolution' as merely a continuing transformation of the same kind of architecture—the later work becomes simply a new dimension of the earlier "purely architectural metaphor." Even the method of composition remains in Colquhoun's view basically unchanged.



gazebo study



*Variation on
C.F. Hansen 1750-1845*



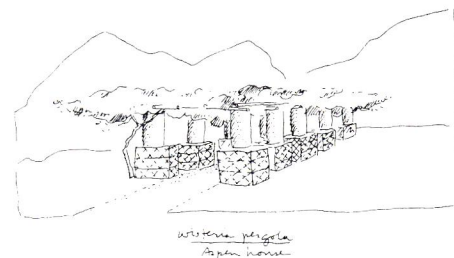
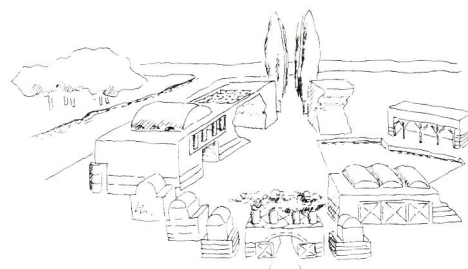
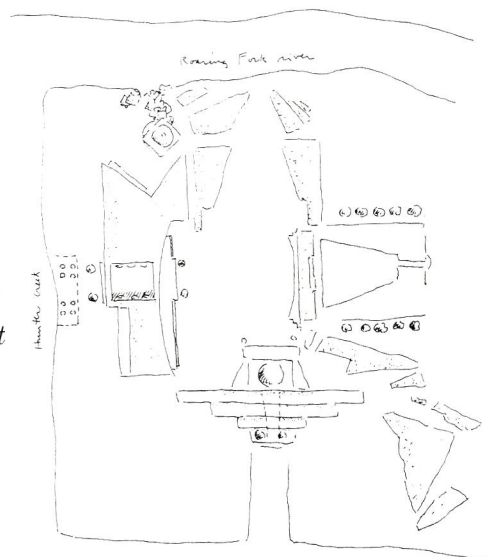
gazebo study

Colquhoun's interpretation in the end is the ultimate result of Rowe's removal of ideology from form, a belief that all forms, without a necessary meaning either for the language itself or for society, are indiscriminately the same. However, when one compares Graves's early and later work, it seems clear that his early work was modernist in the sense that the later work is not, and that the process of evolution that Colquhoun discovers seems in fact only to obscure this distinction.

The later work is filled with metaphoric imagery. Graves is now no longer occupied with the necessities of modernist poetics but rather with the adumbration of historicist collage. In Graves's early work the use of abstraction, Cubist collage, and articulation of 'mute elements' in plan and section could be seen as a process of internalizing meaning in the modernist sense of 'work on the language'. Previously, images from Matisse and Le Corbusier, while containing for Graves archetypal significance of man and nature, nevertheless were deeply embedded in the language of modernism. The new images, drawn largely from a repertory of pre-modern and classical models, are still archetypal, but they now display Graves's ambivalence between a modernism on the one hand and anthropocentrism on the other. For while modernism, despite its own polemical protestations, deployed both historical and archetypal references in its symbolism, it was never representational in essence. It was always fundamentally moving away from classical mimesis toward a concern for its own objecthood. Classicism, on the other hand, in imitating man through its orders and symbols, subsumed the object within the man-nature relationship.

In shifting from a concern for the object-in-itself toward architectural metaphors that, for example, refer to "the classical tripartite division of vertical surfaces, symbolically foot, body, and head," Graves had essentially turned from modernism toward classicism, rejecting the implicit task of modernism to bring about a change in the relation between man and object, the potential realization of a condition of objecthood distinct from man.

The fragmentation and archetypal imagery always present in Graves's painting has been shifted in the later architecture from the plan to the surface. The new work removes the 'degree zero of expressiveness' from the plan with its pochéed indications of volume to the literal imagery of thinly pochéed facades. Instead of the rich sectional manipulation in his early work, which opened up an investigation into the potential nature of space, Graves seems now more intent on a deductive mannerism—leaving his volumes drained of their former energy and relying instead on 'historical puns' which cannot be made in space but rather on surface. Sectional and

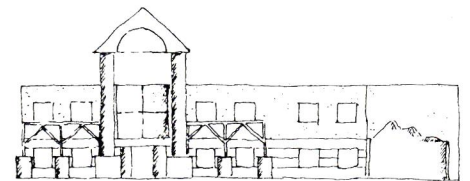
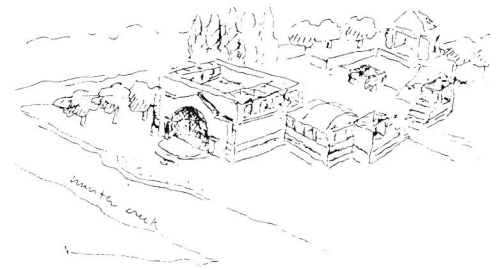


24 volumetric energy does not transform easily into historical allusion.

Here he moves decisively away from modernism toward the 'classical architectural tradition'. Modernism, with its new technology, was able to provide the architect with the free facade. Liberated from its classical condition of materiality, this facade acquired the potential to express its own being. Where traditional architecture had to find its abstract condition in the plan, and its socially and ideologically symbolic realm in the facade, modernism could use both as pure objecthood. It was the abstraction of the modernist facade which provided a kind of conceptual *poché*; which in turn allowed for volumetric exploration.

In the House in Aspen, the archetypal references to the 'primitive hut' and the classical meanings of the keystone arch are incorporated in a facade that also becomes the plan of Graves's Roma Interrotta project, because of the supposedly more accessible meanings provided by such allusions. The imagery is now more literal; it no longer contains any of the ideological content of modernism. This literalness finally results in the total dissolution of the object itself, where a house, for example, is no longer conceived as a house (a social or ideological entity) or an object (in itself) but rather as the painting of an object. Here the abstract nature of the architectural object has been dematerialized through the multiplicity of its allusions to the past. And finally with the movement from the 'silence' of abstraction to the literalness of metaphor the modernist work on the language is abandoned.

Both Colquhoun and Graves, in response to the silent—that is to say, non-mimetic—object of modernism, seem to be arguing for a return to a 'classical architectural tradition'. Certainly Graves's images drawn from Ledoux and Lutyens seek to re-present an aspect of architecture which may have been too easily passed over by modernism. But this recourse to the pre-modern past assumes that the nature and the limits of modernism have been exhausted. It also presumes that the architect may pick and choose from history as he likes—an arrogance of power—and that modernism no longer poses an alternative to the 'ancient values' of humanism. This is not however to offer a new argument for the *Zeitgeist*, for the moral imperatives of a continuing modernism, for this would be to fall back into the same trap from which Graves's architecture is seeking to escape. But modernism in its concern for a self-referential imagery created in the silence of the object vis-à-vis man a new relationship between man and object. This modernist condition, once proposed, cannot easily be withdrawn or ignored. Modernism in proposing this silence pointed to the difference in ideology between something which is polemical, an apologia for the real, and



something which in itself is real; between the rhetoric of a work and its inherent nature. In effect the ideology of modernism, in its concern for self-referential objecthood, proposed that meaning and nature are the same. In this condition the need for an external rhetorical justification for the object dissolves into a silence that is not simply the absence of rhetoric but in itself the embodiment of self-referential meaning. In the end modernism made it possible for objects to be released from their role of 'speaking for man' to be able to 'speak for themselves', of their own objecthood, a change that was and is bound up with the fundamentally transformed condition of man and the world of objects produced by the conditions of modernity.

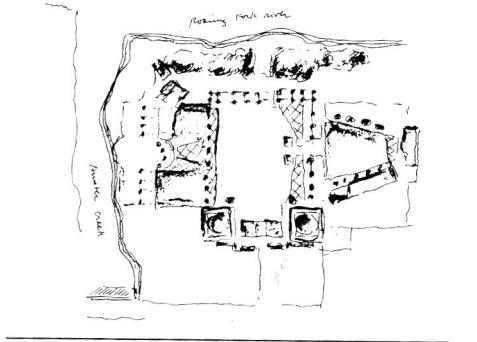
In his later work not only does Graves appear to leave the camp of modernism, to which he once seemed to have belonged so resolutely, but his work now even begins to call into question the apparent ideological modernism of the earlier work. Whether or not Graves himself was fully prepared to accept its ideological implications, his work on the Corbusian language certainly had the appearance of a commentary. Its authenticity was sustained as much by the ideology inherent in the polemic and implicit in its use as by the forms themselves. Even though systematic work on the language was never evident in Graves's early work, his general commitment to a modernist position was clear. A belief in the idea of modernism, after all, does not necessarily commit one to modernist practice. But even if one cannot take Graves to task for his failure to defend modernism, his current renunciation of modernist ideology and the moral content of his former work in order to make an architecture which no longer questions or elaborates the present condition of man in relation to his object world unwittingly reduces his images to those relativistic realms of taste and erudition which he formerly eschewed.

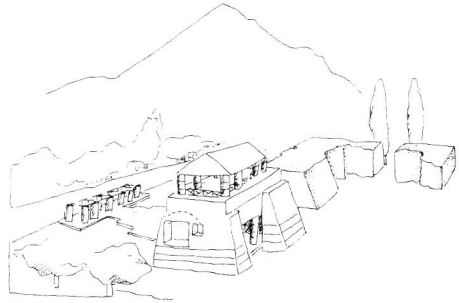
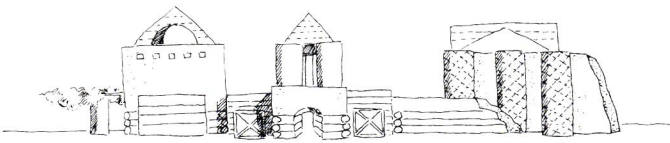
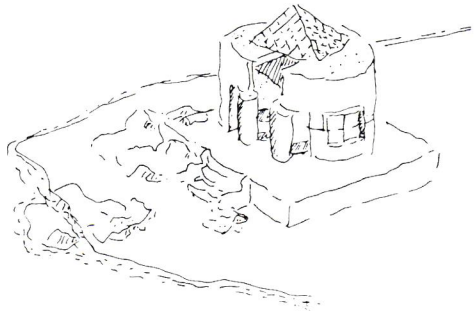
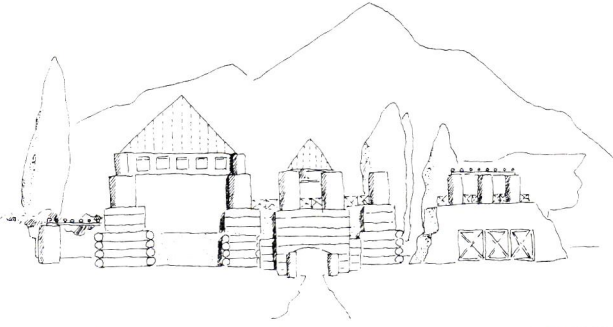
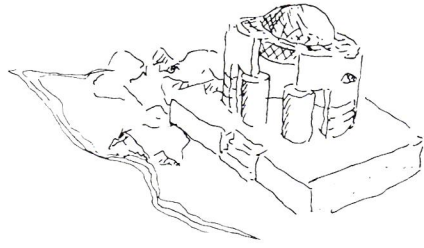
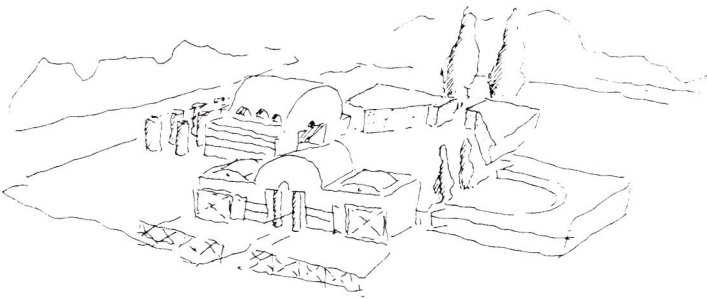
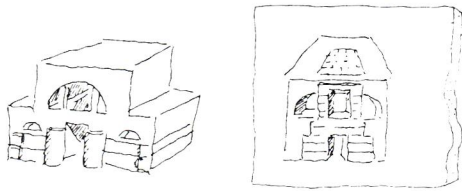
Here Manfredo Tafuri's assessment of modernism seems more accurate than that of either Rowe or Colquhoun. He says that instead of the "deceptive attempts to give architecture an ideological dress" he prefers a "silent and outdated purity, form without utopia, a return to pure architecture, in the best cases, sublime uselessness." Piranesi, for example, for him "translates into images not of a reactionary criticism of the social promises of the Enlightenment, but of a lucid prophecy of what society liberated from the ancient values and their consequent restraints will have to be." Piranesi's imagery is hermetic: it provokes a sense of unease and alienation. But Graves's architecture is a literal return to the imagery of Piranesi. Unlike Piranesi his images are gratifying and accepting.

Graves's work now seems to be caught between a reaffirmation of the 'ancient values' of architectural tradition on the one hand and on the other,



26 a questioning of that tradition; a questioning in the classical tradition that does not contain the ideological content of modernism. Unlike the ideological silence envisioned by Tafuri, or the as yet little explored 'silence' of modernist work to speak of its own 'sacred realm'—the internal structure of the language—Graves's new work speaks of its accessibility. As Graves's former content was silent it was also ideological. It now speaks, but with an ideological silence.





1 Tommaso G. Masaccio. Saint Peter raising the Son of Theophilus, 1428. Brancacci Chapel, S. Maria de Carmine, Florence.

28



Alan Colquhoun

One of the symptoms of the reaction against functionalist doctrine has been a return to the use of stylistic elements borrowed from the past. This practice gains support from a variety of ideological positions (often mutually incompatible), and its forms are correspondingly varied. Toward the end of this article I will discuss two of these positions, associated with 'neo-realism' and 'neo-rationalism' respectively.¹ But my main purpose is to consider stylistic quotation as a single phenomenon, and to examine it in relation both to the historical tradition and to modernism.

The use of stylistic elements of the past in contemporary buildings seems to be in direct contradiction to the principles of the Modern Movement. But this movement was never as monolithic as its chief apologists made out. In the 1920's and 1930's, we find many oblique references to the Beaux Arts tradition and to vernacular buildings, particularly in the work of Le Corbusier. And since World War II there have been several tendencies which have disputed the functionalist and mechanistic tenets of the so-called International Style, and have sought to recover, in one form or another, the 'architectural tradition'; one thinks of neoclassicism in America and social realism in Italy, both in the 1950's. But this recovery tended to be either syntactic rather than iconic, classicizing plans being combined with a typically modern spatial or elevational treatment, or it derived traditional forms (windows, ornament) from the 'natural' use of traditional materials, thus retaining its links with functionalist doctrine. These revisionist tendencies within the movement generally avoided literal quotations from the past, and maintained one of the most persistent principles of modern architecture—the prohibition of all *direct* stylistic reference.

This prohibition is altogether understandable within the context of the avant-garde since the second half of the nineteenth century—an avant-garde which set as its task the discovery of a 'language' which would be the product of its place in history. Eclecticism had introduced cultural relativism into architecture. The avant-garde sought a new definition of style which would reconcile the demands of 'nature' and 'reason' with the fact that culture was subject to historical evolution.

Discussion of avant-garde architecture has usually revolved round the relationship between form and function. Function has been held to give meaning to form, while form has been held to 'express' function. This proposition has formed the rational basis for architectural discourse within avant-garde theory, and even within academic theory, for a hundred and fifty years or more. It is a proposition which assumes that the 'meaning' of architectural forms is the result of natural expression.

Here I want to look at avant-garde architecture from another point of view. What the theory of natural expression ignores is the importance throughout history of conventional meaning in architecture. Instead of seeing modern architecture as the last step in an evolutionary process in which the natural relationship between form and function has been a constant, I think it would be useful to see the principle of natural expression as a break with an older tradition. If we look at the Modern Movement in this way, the fundamental dialectic no longer seems to be that between form and function, but that between form and another entity, which I shall call figure. By *form* I mean a configuration that is held to have either a natural meaning or no meaning at all. By *figure* I mean a configuration whose meaning is given by culture, whether or not it is assumed that this meaning ultimately has a basis in nature.

Insofar as it has discussed the formal aspects of architecture, modern criticism has generally appealed to principles of form and set these in relation to function. The recent tendencies toward stylistic reference seem to be motivated by a need to reintroduce the notion of figure into architecture and to see architectural configurations as already containing a set of cultural meanings.

The origins of what I call figure lie in the classical tradition of rhetoric. In fact the word *figure*, together with the word *trope*, is quite precise as a technical term within classical poetics. I am using it here more loosely to apply to arts other than literature, but there is some justification for this, since in the Renaissance the theory of painting was to some extent explicitly based on that of classical

30 rhetoric. We know that classical rhetoric, particularly in its literary mode, was preserved throughout the Middle Ages. Scholastic thought was both a fusion of, and a reconciliation between, the Judeo-Christian tradition and that of the ancients. In the Renaissance a further interpretation of these traditions was made, in the light of a renewed study of classical literary sources.

According to the principle of rhetoric there is a distinction between what can be imagined and what can be thought. This distinction implies that a figure represents an idea. The purpose of this representation is persuasion. Figures representing ideas were thus organized didactically to persuade people to adopt the values of the good and the perfect, for the benefit of either society or the soul. This concept also involves a distinction between figure and content. The figure gives an approximation, as faithfully as possible, of a content which remains ineffable. Thus, when we look at figures we do not see truth itself, but its reflections, or its emblems. These figures, or tropes, become to a certain extent fixed—they become conventional types. The social function of these types is to establish certain ideas in the mind of the spectator or listener and, ultimately, to reinforce and preserve an ideology.

The effectiveness of figures or tropes resides in their synthetic power. They draw together and crystallize a series of complex experiences, which are diffuse and imperceptible. The figure, therefore, is a condensation, the immediate effect of which is to suggest the richness and complexity of reality. In this way the spectator or listener is able to establish a relation between that which he sees or hears and his own experience. The use of the figure in Renaissance painting has been studied by Michael Baxandall.² Baxandall points out that in fifteenth century painting the figure was the image of a human gesture. The aim of such a gestural figure was both to arouse the emotions and to facilitate the memorization of certain ideas. These images always showed general and non-individualized types, and “the narrative in which they took part was expressed in terms of massive and theatrical gestures.” Alberti, in his treatise on painting,³ states that the movements of the soul are recognized in the move-

ments of the body. Thus the “affections” (pain, joy, fear, shame, etc.) possess their equivalent gestures or postures (fig. 1).

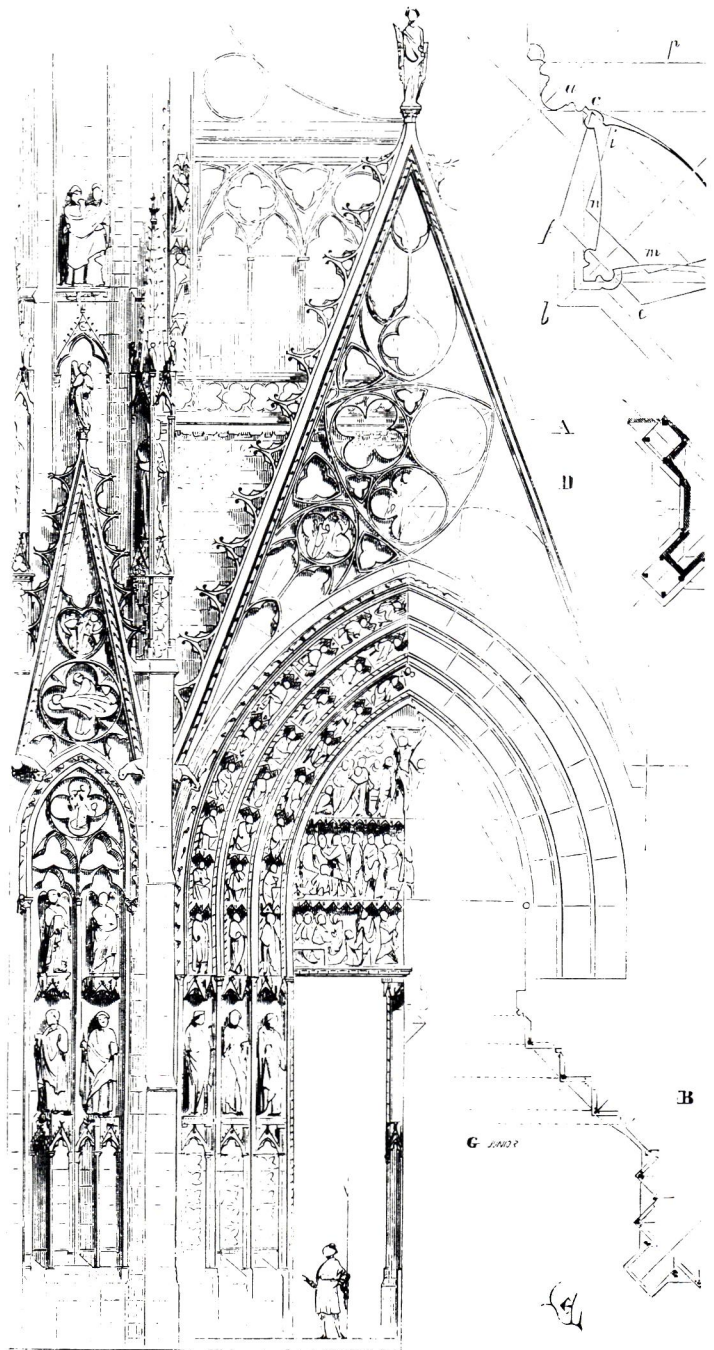
I would suggest that there exists in architecture an equivalent to this gesture or figure in painting. Although architecture does not imitate the external world, it attaches itself to this world through our experience or our knowledge of buildings. All the brute facts of construction, all our perceptions of gravity, and all our disposition toward spatial enclosure are ‘humanized’ and become the signs of other things. In the architecture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance we find a limited number of basic elements which are thus turned into signs; walls and their penetrations, columns, beams, arches, roofs, and so on. From among all the possible combinations of these different elements, each style chooses a certain repertoire and institutes a commentary on structural form (fig. 2).

The concept of figure which I am using is general and can be applied to both Gothic and Renaissance architecture, despite their fundamental differences. We recognize it equally in the aedicule, as isolated by John Summerson,⁴ and in the Vitruvian orders. In both cases a figural composition is able to convey a complex set of ideas which is not inherent in the basic structural form from which it is derived and which refers to other ideas within the culture. In the case of the Vitruvian system, the different orders take on meaning through their mutual opposition (Doric/Corinthian) and their association with further oppositions (virility/delicacy), leading to their association with particular deities (which are themselves figural representations). Such systems are developed through the fixing of recognizable and—literally in the case of metaphor—memorable entities. When a person imagines the function of a column or a roof, he sees in his mind’s eye a particular column or roof, and proceeds to make associations of meaning. In an analogous way, an entire building can become a metaphor, fixed by its typological content. Thus there exists a system of types, which correspond to the various genres of classical literature.

To some extent one can see that this metonymic, meta-

phoric, and typological procedure continued into the nineteenth century and even until today, if one thinks of popular architecture. It is a procedure which relies on the conventionality and typicality of forms and a set of meanings which have become fixed through social usage. But, to use a Darwinian analogy, this system tended gradually to degenerate during the eighteenth century. The original meanings attached to the orders and the typological catalogue became either vague or trivialized, and the underlying system of thought decomposed into a sort of diffuse memory. If thought still instinctively used the fixed classical figures and tropes, there was an uncertainty as to the precise role of the elements and their meaning within the *Weltanschauung*.

This degeneration in the system of figures descending from the Renaissance was tempered in the eighteenth century by the attempt to recover a sort of primitive experience of architecture. (The theory of the primitive hut proposed by Laugier [fig. 3] has its adepts even today, whether in the behavioristic theories of Christopher Alexander or among the 'neo-rationalists', for whom it remains a distillation of eighteenth century neoclassicism and is clothed with historical specificity.) But perhaps the most radical modification of the classical system of architectural figures is found in the work of the "visionary architects" of the French Revolution, Ledoux, Boullée, and Lequeu. These architects no longer believed that, as was the case in the Renaissance, the architectural figure corresponded to a hidden reality, revealed through Biblical or classical authority. Nonetheless they continued to use the Greco-Roman repertoire, whose meanings were seen to be established by social custom. But although they operated within a conceptual system inherited from the Renaissance according to which figures had metaphorical properties, they combined the traditional elements in a new way and were thus able to extend and modify classical meanings. The design of Lequeu called "Le Rendezvous de Bellevue" (fig. 4) is an amalgam of quotations taken from different styles and organized according to 'picturesque' principles of composition. This building is a sort of *bricolage* made from figural fragments which are still recognizable whatever the degree of distortion. The case of



3 *The Natural Model: Laugier's primitive hut, 1753.*

4 *Rendezvous, Bellevue, France. Jean-Jacques Lequeu, c.1780.*

5 *American Grain Store, 1920.*

6 *Christopher Dresser. Teapot, 1880.*

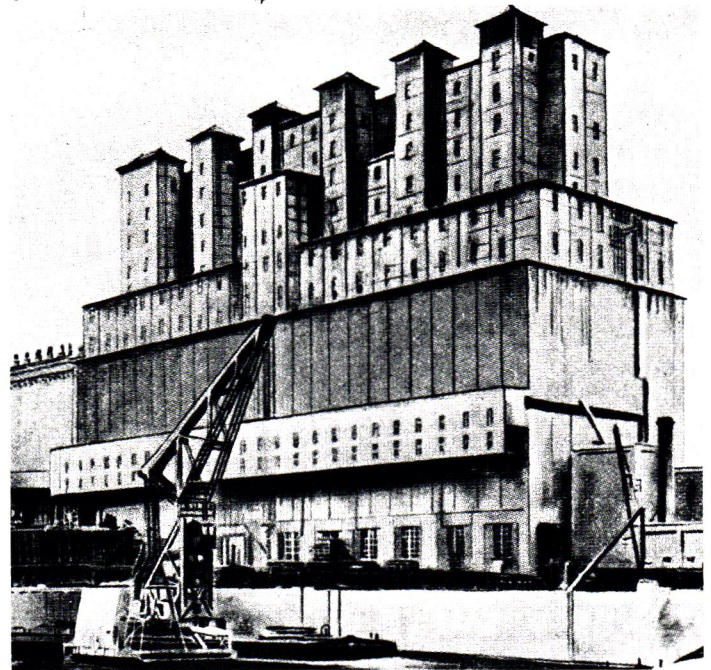
32 Lequeu is perhaps different from that of Boullée or Ledoux because in his work classical composition seems often to be entirely abandoned. But even in an architecture based on picturesque principles, whose evident aim is to shock, the ability to provide this shock is dependent on the existence of traditional figures. One can, therefore, say of the work of all the visionary architects that it is not only an *architecture parlante* but also *une architecture qui parle de soi même*. It consciously manipulates an existing code, even though in the case of Lequeu, it fragments this code. Emil Kaufmann and others have interpreted the work of Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu as being prophetic of the formal and abstract tendencies in the new architecture of the 1920's and 1930's, and in particular the work of Le Corbusier. I prefer to see it as presenting a parallel to the present-day problem of the survival and reinterpretation of the figure of the rhetorical tradition.



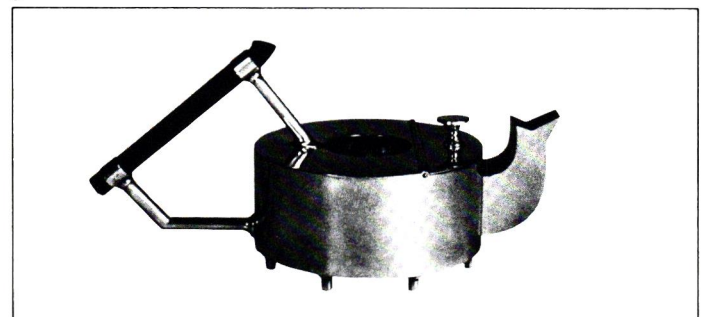
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At this point I would like to pass from a consideration of the notion of figure and that of form. The concept of pure form, of *Gestaltung*, posed as something external to style, probably comes from certain theoreticians of the late eighteenth century, such as Quatremère de Quincy, for whom the 'type' was an entity distinct from the 'model'. The model, for Quatremère, would be a concrete entity corresponding to a particular style, while the type implies a degree of abstraction and is beyond stylistic accident.

But the category of form in relation to architecture and the applied arts is not integrated into a theoretical system until the end of the nineteenth century. It is above all through Hermann Muthesius that we know this concept of form. Muthesius never defined precisely what he meant by this concept, but it is possible to approach a definition by looking at the work of certain English designers of the late nineteenth century who influenced Muthesius, such as Christopher Dresser (fig. 6). These works are characterized by a degree of abstraction, a simplicity and purity of profile, and an absence of detail and ornament, all of which are typical of the late period of the Arts and Crafts movement. It is also possible to understand the relationship of form to architecture if we look at certain industrial structures illustrated by Muthesius in the *Deutscher*

Werkbund *Jahrbuchs*, such as the North American Grain Silos (fig. 5).

The idea of form is equally present in the writings of certain aestheticians of the second half of the nineteenth century. Fielder's theory of 'pure visibility' and his assignment of a privileged position to perception among artistic activities is not unrelated to Wölfflin's discussion of painting and architecture in terms of stylistic grammars or to Croce's belief in art as a cognitive system independent of all discursive or associative operations.

It would seem probable that the idea of form has a neo-classical derivation. After the disappearance of the systems of thought which had descended from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at the time of the 'scientific revolution' of the seventeenth century, architectural theory distinguished between 'certain beauty' and 'arbitrary beauty'. For example, Christopher Wren declared that 'certain beauty' in architecture depended on geometry, whereas all other beauties depended on custom. This point of view persisted into the twentieth century, and we find, for instance, Jeanneret and Ozenfant asserting in the 1920's that the plastic arts are organized according to a primary quality defined by the elementary geometrical solids, and that secondary qualities emerge by association of ideas.⁵

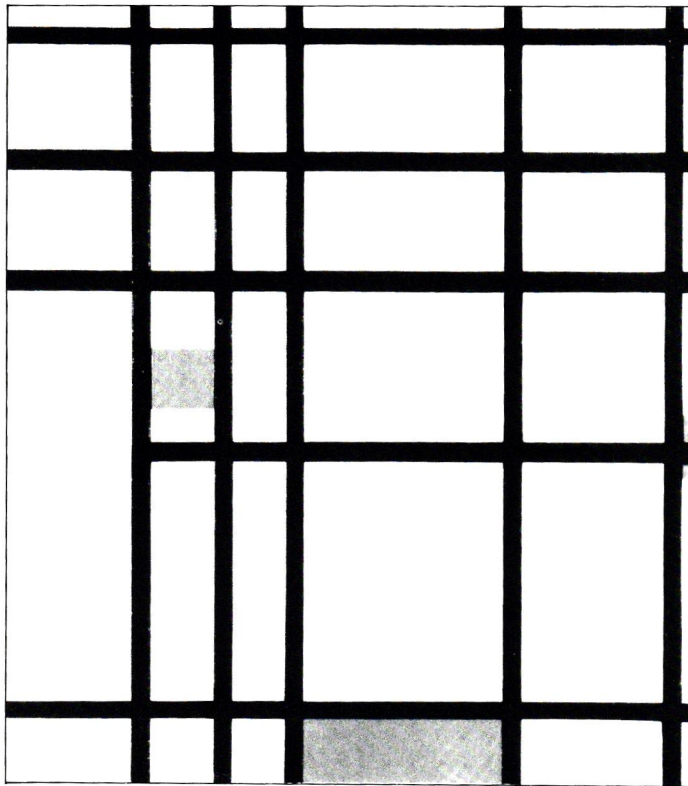
The notion of pure form had for its effect the reservation of a field of expression proper to each art. For this division of art into parallel departments music became the paradigm because the meanings of this art seemed to be articulated without any external reference. Non-figurative painting had the same property (fig. 7). If the specific field of music is tone and rhythm, that of the plastic arts is form and color. The objective of painting is not to describe or depict the objects of the external world, but to reveal, through form, the laws which underlie the appearance of things. Literature shows a similar need—not only creative literature, but also criticism. The Formalist criticism which was developed in Moscow at the beginning of the 1920's and was based on Saussurian linguistics, put forward a theory according to which the object of criticism was sit-

uated exclusively in the interior of the text, and not in the subject treated by the text.

The rather vague notion of form which I have attempted to delineate by these few examples is a fundamental concept in the development of modern art. And although the special social, economic, and technological status of architecture had led it to emphasize function, this concept of pure form is no less important in the development of modern architecture than it is in the other arts.

We now have placed in their respective historical settings two apparently contradictory notions of the relation of forms to meaning in art and architecture. While the notion of figure includes conventional and associative meanings, that of form excludes them. While the notion of figure assumes that architecture is a language with a limited set of elements which already exist in their historical specificity, that of form holds that architectural forms can be reduced to an a-historical 'degree zero'; architecture, as a historical phenomenon, is not determined by what has existed before, but by emergent social and technological facts, operating on a minimum number of constant physiological and psychological laws.

A further contradiction arises from this situation. On the one hand the traditional figures of architecture are embedded in the imagination, and there continues to be a desire to repeat configurations which carry conventional meanings; on the other, the development of technology has created a separation between means and ends, between techniques and meaning, so that when figures are used they are not necessarily the logical result of the techniques employed. The recognition of technical necessity and the need for meaning are equally acknowledged, but they belong to different mental sets. The development of the notion of form was a response to this separation of means and ends, and therefore sought the universal laws of aesthetics as independent of the extrinsic facts of technological or historical change. On the basis of these laws it would be possible, it was imagined, both to inoculate art against technology and to accept technology as a categorical imperative which no longer had the power to destroy



meaning, because what was destroyed—the ‘tradition’—was no longer to be considered as a constitutive element of meaning.

No attempt to return to figures which are derived from the rhetorical tradition or to respond to the popular tendency to see architectural forms in terms of meanings which are a part of their own history can ignore this evolution. We have seen that as early as the eighteenth century the rhetorical tradition was no longer something which could be taken for granted. On the one hand Quatremère and Durand attempted to reduce it to a system of typological classifications, to turn it into an abstract system which could be manipulated independently of a living tradition. On the other, the newly rediscovered ‘styles’ could be applied to buildings to provide a whole series of sub-cultural meanings which no longer formed part of a coherent cosmology. This process of trivialization of meaning continues today with the multiplication of kitsch objects, in which figures are reduced to clichés—to ‘dead’ metaphors. The figural cliché is the reverse side of the same coin that contains the notion of form, and represents the ‘instinctual’ side of the same historical phenomenon—an instinct which is naturally exploited by the system of production. One of the chief arguments in favor of the return of the figure is that the market has recuperated—to use a neo-Marxist term—a minimalist architecture based on the notion of pure form. The demands of economics and utility have shown that the ‘principles’ of modern architecture can be easily subverted out of all recognition. But it is equally true that this same urge has exploited, where this was profitable, what remains of the figural tradition.

The attempt to legitimize this tradition and to give it back the authenticity which it lacks in the form of kitsch is not, therefore, a simple act of recovery. It can be accomplished only in full consciousness of what it wants to supersede—not only abstract principles of form which have been unable to sustain meaning in architecture, but also the world of kitsch which has only sustained meanings in an impoverished form.

We are dealing with a tradition which has come down to

7 Piet Mondrian. *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue*, 1936/1943.

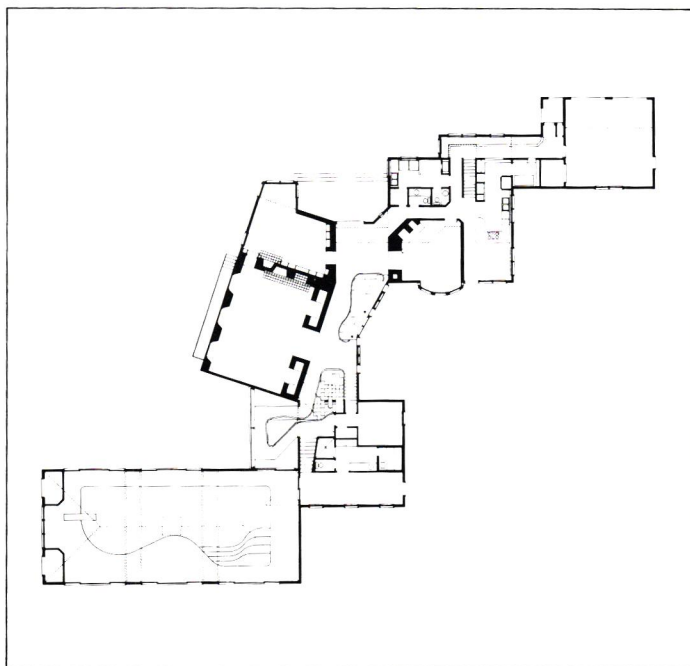
8 *House near New York*. Charles W. Moore with Richard B. Oliver, 1976. *South facade*.

9 *Ground floor plan*.

10 *South elevation*.



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us in a fragmented condition. The process by which these pieces might be reassembled is far from clear, but we can see the attempt being made in different ways if we examine the work of two groups of architects who have attempted such a recovery of the figural tradition. The first group consists of a number of American architects of whom Charles Moore and Robert Venturi are perhaps the most representative. Moore uses what might be called 'figurative fragments' which are not organized into a coherent system. He does not, as did the eclectics of the early nineteenth century, attempt to reconstitute the figurative system of an entire building. Rather, he uses isolated and partial lexical figures, such as roofs, windows, and colonnades, and composes them in ways which are characteristically 'modern'—that is to say, according to a syntax which is functional and picturesque, and a semantic which verges on the parodistical (figs. 8–10). In both Moore and Venturi the figure tends to become isolated as a sign no longer restricted to the specific category of the architectural sign. Architecture is seen to belong to a more general sign system whose referents may or may not be architecture itself, according to local circumstances. The circumstantial nature of these signs is justified in terms of a liberal tradition which emphasizes the uniqueness of the project and the taste of a particular client (real or assumed).

35

The second group consists of Aldo Rossi and the Italian 'neo-rationalists'. Rossi's work attempts to exclude all but the most general types and to avoid the circumstantial (figs. 11, 12). Particular figures are used not because of the associations they arouse within a particular context or in relation to particular functions, but because of their power to suggest archetypes—archetypes which are seen as belonging to the autonomous tradition of architecture itself. The 'ideal' nature of these signs belongs to an ideological framework which seeks to recover architecture as a collective experience.

But whatever their differences, both the 'neo-realists' and the 'neo-rationalists' refuse to reduce architecture to pure form. Both accept the figural tradition of architecture and its semantic connotations. How does this figural tradition

36 reappear in their work? It certainly does not appear as the total retrieval of a 'lost tradition' of rhetoric. Its recovery depends on a process in which fragments of an older language are reused. Moreover, the referents are not those of the original tradition, where they were a set of ideas belonging to the culture as a whole, of which the language of architecture was an integral part. In the modern recovery of the tradition what is being referred to is the architectural figure as such. What was once the form of a content is now the content itself. We are dealing with a sort of metalanguage—with an architecture which speaks of itself.

Such an architecture is one in which 'fragments' of a tradition are re-appropriated. The fragmentary nature of the work of Moore and Venturi is self-evident. But it is not so clear in the case of Rossi because of his avowed intention to reconstruct an 'entire' architecture. But that the term 'fragment' can legitimately be applied to his work becomes clear when we see it in relation to technology. Precisely because of his claims to a sort of universality, this relation becomes critical. The works of Moore and Venturi make no such claims: they are produced within the pragmatic limits of *any* existing technology, and their commissions (small projects, mostly private houses) by nature avoid a conflict with 'advanced' technology. Rossi, on the other hand, in spite of the fact that in his writings he accepts the need to respond to technical evolution, implies in much of his work the avoidance of this imperative. What he seems to be saying is that the older techniques possessed more figural capacity (fig. 13). Historical figures were effective because they were pliable to a symbolic need which was a-historical. If we refer to a particular style it is not just because the figures of this style have accumulated meanings in history which the memory retains (which would be pure associationalism) but because this style has unlocked a door to universal meanings. We *can* refer to it for the simple reason that the techniques by which it was achieved are still perfectly reasonable and practicable (even though they may not stretch our technical capacity to its limits). We *must* refer to it because any attempt to reach the 'degree zero' of figures (i.e. to arrive at form) will automatically lead us back to

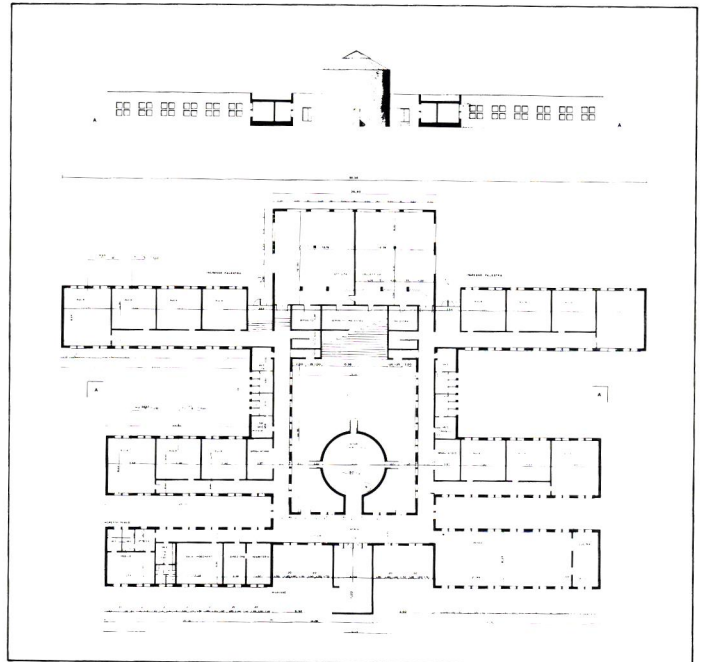
11 *Elementary School, Fagnano, Olona. Aldo Rossi with G. Braghieri, A. Cantafora, 1973.*

12 *Section of services block, plan of ground floor.*

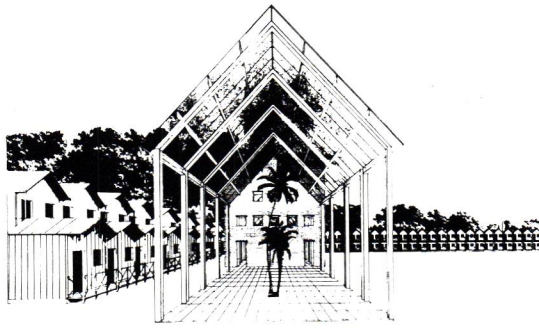
13 *Students' hostel at Chieti. Aldo Rossi with G. Braghieri and A. Cantafora.*



11



12



13
the historical moments in which these universal meanings were made visible.

But when an entire architectural symbolism rests on the historical technology to which it was attached, it removes itself from certain characteristically modern means of production. It remains the vision of one man, possible to achieve in individual (and even very large) commissions because of the uneven development of building technology, but potentially thwarted where economy imposes its own pragmatic laws. What is 'rational' in society includes what is pragmatic. In the age of architectural rhetoric the demands of pragmatics were not in opposition to the demands of symbolic form; today they often are.

We must, therefore, see the return of the architectural figure as subject to the same laws of fragmentation which we see operating in all the other 'modern' arts—fragmentation in the works themselves, and also in terms of their social context. In excluding any reference to past styles, modern architecture took a similar position to that of twelve-tone music in relation to the tonal system. But unlike music, modern architecture was polemically committed to the transformation of the 'real' world. If it has already abandoned this claim, it must accept a role similar to that of the other arts in relation to culture in general—a role in which 'possible' and 'virtual' worlds are created and in which the recovery of traditional meanings, through the use of the architectural figure, can never be integrated with a total system of representation, as it was in the rhetorical tradition.

Notes

This article was first presented as a lecture at the *Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*, November 1977.

1. I am here using the classification adopted by Mario Gandelsonas, *Oppositions 5*, though the term 'realist' is sufficiently vague to allow different interpretations, viz. that of Steinman and Reichlin, *Archithese 19*. In his editorial for this issue Stanislaus von Moos draws attention to the disparity between these two definitions.

2. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (Oxford, 1971); *ibid.*, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Painting* (Oxford, 1972).

3. Leone Battista Alberti, *L'architettura (de re aedificatoria)*,

G. Orlandi, ed., introduction by Paolo Portoghesi (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966).

4. John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions* (New York: Norton, 1963).

5. Jeanneret and Ozenfant, "Purism," *Esprit Nouveau*, 4, 1920.

Figure Credits

1 Reprinted from *Masaccio Frescoes in Florence* (Paris: N.Y. Graphic Society, 1956), p. 5.

2 Reprinted from M. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, vol. 7 (Paris: A. Morel et Cie, éditeurs, 1864), p. 433.

3 Reprinted from Marc Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture* (Paris: Chez Duchesne, 1753).

4 Reprinted from *Visionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu* (Houston, Texas: University of St. Thomas, 1968).

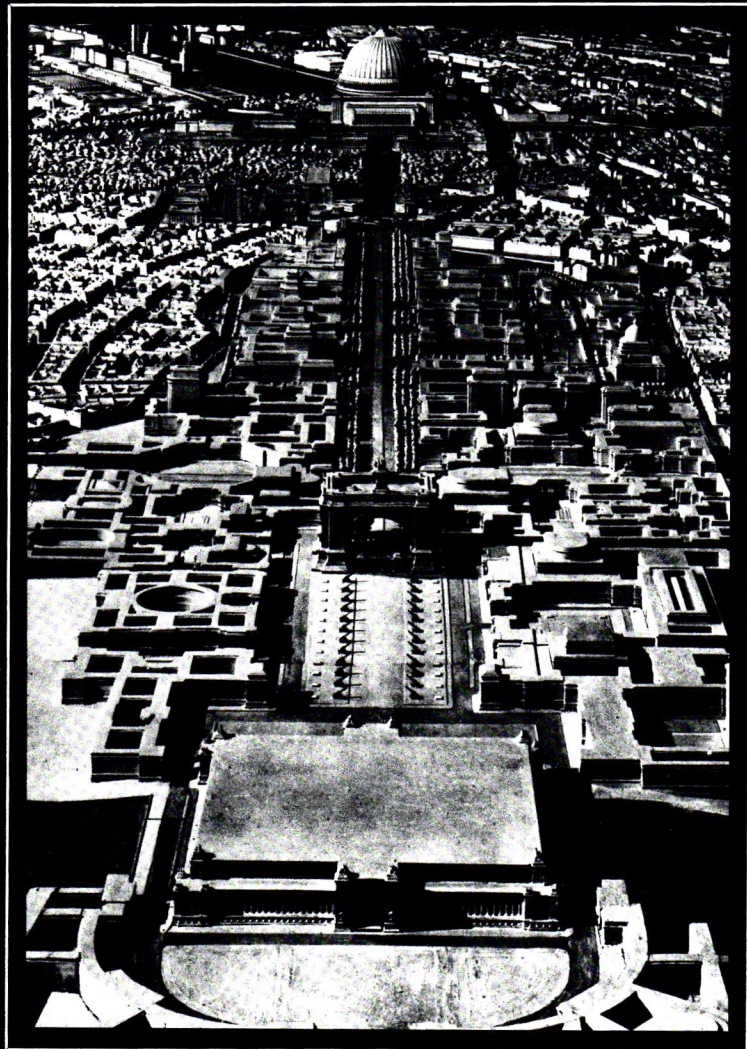
5 Reprinted from Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1960).

6 Courtesy Alan Colquhoun.

7 Reprinted from *Piet Mondrian* (Basel: Editione Galerie Beyeler, n.d.).

8–10 Reprinted from *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, March/April, 1976.

11–13 Reprinted from *Lotus*, 15, June, 1977.



1 (frontispiece) Model of Berlin's new center. Albert Speer with Adolf Hitler, 1939. View from the south station: Arch of Triumph with the Great Hall at the far end.

Introduction

For too long the architecture of Albert Speer has been synonymous with "Nazi architecture." This is at once a reductive and consoling hypothesis.¹ It has only served the game of those who have wanted to keep fenced out of the sacred garden of modern architecture (or the Modern Movement) anything that could radically call its continuity into question.² The history of the architecture of totalitarian regimes cannot be allowed to enter into that historiographical mythology. For deviations as radical as those represented by "totalitarian architecture" the blame has fallen on those easiest to identify: Speer and Hitler, Piacentini and Mussolini, Zdanov and Stalin. Facile axioms justify moral judgments that could not but be univocal. But architecture is not univocal, nor do its infinite paths lead everyone to the same goals. Its history is infinitely cobwebbed. For this, as well as to understand *non*-Nazi architecture, it is useful to study Nazi architecture, and as part of it to analyze the phenomenon of Speer.

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The following interview is nothing but a document, but a document that can be of especial interest to the reader if he pauses to consider attentively the course of this colloquium. In fact, certain of Speer's silences seemed to us more significant than some of his answers.

Although others have drawn closer to the phenomenon of Speer, who is here reduced to his "architectural dimension," this document has a twofold meaning, even if it constitutes a small contribution that enriches only by a small amount a documentation which, although still awaiting dissection and analysis,³ is already quite full. For this reason, since we do not think a colloquium with Speer will interest only those concerned with Nazi architecture and to help explain our own "curiosity," we trust to what two attentive readers of Speer's *Erinnerungen* wrote, hoping that their words will clarify the meaning of our work.

"The ambivalence of Speer's memories in the last analysis reflects the ambivalence of National Socialism itself. The apparent ingenuity, the protestations of exclusively technical interests, the ostentatious concreteness (with which a young man like Speer and the numerous technocrats of far greater import in other sectors collaborated in the

40 functioning of the National Socialist regime) present themselves even in Speer's case as the result of an ambiguity, implying a differentiation from the 'true' National Socialism. But the very essence of the National Socialist system itself, which passed itself off as pseudo-legal, pseudo-constitutional, and even pseudo-democratic, is misinterpreted since in the end it was not based on this pretext of superior objectivity. . . . In reality, Speer's ascent to become one of the major props of the Third Reich was neither an isolated nor an ambiguous case, but rather an expression of the methods used by National Socialism: radical politicization and apolitical specialization, reactionary political romanticism and exaltation of modern technological progress. This basic contradiction constitutes in effect the true essence of Fascist ideology and politics."⁴

"The Reich, which with the sovereign preeminence of Germans and perhaps also of all 'Germanic peoples' would have brought the rest of the world to slavery and could act only with terror, had to spill a lot of blood. Hitler was thus consistent in allowing himself to be seduced into war. The contemporaneity of this seduction with the dates established for the realization of the building projects gives rise to the suspicion that with these projects Hitler intended to mask his bellicose intentions. This is a possibility that Speer too considers, although without being able to resolve himself to accepting it. One must concur with him where he declares that two aspects inhabited Hitler's nature, neither subordinate to the other. In Hitler the joys of construction and destruction were equally acute and efficient. This double aspect also determines the strong impression that the building projects give rise to in the viewer today. While we study those plans we are aware of the frightening destruction other German cities suffered. We know the ending, and now the beginning suddenly appears before us in all its fullness. The parallelism is what renders the confrontation truly impressive. It seems enigmatic and inexplicable. But in fact it is the concentrated expression of something that, even beyond Hitler, disturbs us. For in the end it is the single incontestable result, ever recurrent, in all of history up to the present time For a true comprehension of this phe-

nomenon new instruments are indispensable. We must see them, obtain them, and use them wherever they are offered. The method for such research cannot yet exist. Here the rigor of specialized disciplines reveals superstition. That they flee is precisely what matters. An unfragmented vision of the phenomenon is the prime presupposition. *Any conceptual arrogance, whatever good results it may have produced elsewhere, is poisonous here.*"⁵

Francesco Dal Co and Sergio Polano

Translation by Diane Ghirardo

Notes

1. We began to gather material on Nazi architecture while preparing a course on the history of architecture held at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia during the academic year 1975-76. The result was the detailed lecture notes edited by F. Dal Co and S. Polano in collaboration with the students in the course, *Holland and Germany* (Venice, 1976.) Also see the review by F. Dal Co of R. R. Taylor, *The Word in Stone* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974) in *Controspazio*, October, 1975.

2. This theme has been considered in the chapter dedicated to the architecture of Nazism and Fascism in M. Tafuri and F. Dal Co, *Architettura Contemporanea* (Milan, 1976).

3. A complete bibliography on Nazism would demand considerable space, in part because, given the theme, it would be impossible not to refer to works of a general historical nature regarding the cultural situation, political and social economy, and the cultural tradition before the advent of Hitler, all of which directly influenced Nazi architectural production. Certain works have recently considered the history of Nazi architecture in original terms, and for the most part they contain ample bibliographies. A. Teut, *Architektur im Dritten Reich* (Berlin-Frankfurt-Vienna, 1967); A. M. Vogt, "Revolutionsarchitektur und Nazi-Klassizismus" in *Argo Festschrift für Kurt Badt* (Cologne, 1970); B. Miller-Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); AA.VV., *Kunst im Dritten Reich. Dokumente der Unterwerfung* (Frankfurt, 1974); R. R. Taylor, *The Word in Stone* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1974); J. Petsch, *Baukunst und Stadtplanung im Dritten Reich* (Munich-Vienna, 1976).

4. K. D. Bracher, *Die Deutschen Diktatur. Entstehung Struktur Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne-Berlin, 1969), p. 672.

5. (Italics ours.) F. Canetti, *Potere e Sopravvivenza* (Milan, 1974), pp. 82-83. Italian translation of *Die Gespaltene Zukunft* and *Macht und Ueberleben* (Munich, 1972).

Interview with Albert Speer
by Francesco Dal Co and Sergio Polano, October 1977

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*In your book *Erinnerungen*,¹ you make some reference to your relationship with Heinrich Tessenow: could you explain to us the terms of this relationship and, in particular, could you recall your collaboration with Tessenow?*

I was only for a short time—about three-quarters of a year—in his atelier, and I was doing some designs, but not independently. I only executed what was already fixed by Tessenow and his closer collaborators. And then I was appointed his assistant at the university. That meant I had to help him teach the students his ideas. I was not engaged in any project of his since these were all done in the studio. It was all his own work.²

What, in your opinion, was Tessenow's intellectual attitude and to what extent did your conception of architecture approach his?

Well, he was an exception in his time. He did not fit into any of the other architectural factions, like the Bauhaus group, the Schmitthenner circle, Bonatz, and so on. He was a loner, without any connection, a man who did not talk much and never changed his attitude toward architecture. His ideas were already fixed in 1910–1911—you can see this especially in his books—and remained unchanged to the end, there was always the same type of imagination in them. His quietness made him very impressive. You could not approach him very closely.

Could we define Tessenow's architecture as "architecture without qualities"?

No, even his designs for small workers' houses, which looked so simple, in reality were thoroughly studied, from the proportions of the windows to the whole surface. It was hard work for him, but he believed in devoting just as much attention to the houses of poor people as to palaces for the rich. And in some way he was deeply involved in and inspired by socialism.

The prevailing values of Tessenow's architecture seem to reflect an old bourgeois stability with a deep feeling for tradition.

I would not say so. I think he was, in his way, modern; he was a man who was open to the future, not excessively bound by tradition. I would never say that he was a

42 traditionalist, he was not.

We didn't mean to say that Tessenow was a conservative, but it seems that his architecture was dedicated to preserving qualities of a world bound to disappear with the development of modern civilization. Don't you think so?
Yes.

Do you think it is possible to find some analogies between the architectural conceptions of Tessenow and Loos?
They have much in common.

What has been Tessenow's influence on your architectural work?

Well, as I wrote to Tessenow in a letter in the early forties, the development of my work owes much to what I learned when I was studying with him as his assistant. I mean, for instance, that I admired the way he could develop a grand plan logically; his approach to architectural problems was in some way, realistic, but on a higher level. When I wrote that to him, I was thinking of my own grand plan for the Chancellery. But, of course, what I did afterwards did not correspond to his thinking. He would say how different he felt from me, how opposed, because he thought in terms of simplicity, of puritanism, while I thought in terms of richness, of the wonderful. This was certainly not his line, but he did not like to assert what he was thinking in those times. Even when I succeeded in getting him invited for a competition, he did not change a bit, you know; he was not influenced by the richness of the architecture of Hitler's time. He was as simple, as poor, as puritanical as always. But I was very much impressed by him.

What was Tessenow's political attitude?

Before, he was close to Social Democrats. Later, he was simply distant from any political point of view. I met him very often, but he was by then of course cautious. It would have been the end of his career as a professor if he had said what was probably in his mind.

We would like to come back to the problem of ornament. In seeing your work, particularly the complex in Nurem-

berg, ornament seems to play a very modest role in your architecture.

There was some ornament in the mosaics.

Your architecture, partly like Troost's, seldom resorts to ornament. In our opinion, this denotes a cultural attitude of a particular kind: could you explain its premises?

It goes back to the change in those who originated Jugendstil—Joseph Olbrich, Peter Behrens, Bruno Paul, and others—which resulted in a new style which was very poor and without ornaments. It is amazing, I think they had had enough of Jugendstil. They started something else, something diverse, without ornament. And Troost was a minor figure in this group. This is neither to give him a lot of credit nor no credit at all.³ The inheritance of Olbrich, Behrens, and others descended via Troost to Hitler, and via Troost and Hitler to me. This was the line. But in my later work, like the Chancellery, I also tried to keep a certain amount of ornament, because without ornament—as with the style of the Zeppelinfeld and the Stadium—there is no variation. The expression quickly goes from quiet to dead. This is the normal development.

As regards the Zeppelinfeld, however, we think that it's necessary to consider other elements, too. The architecture of the Zeppelinfeld is part of an event in which the presence of the crowd plays a very important role, affecting the very essence of the architecture.

Yes, that is right. In that period it was considered as a frame, and ornamentation would not have worked, it would have made it too rich. It makes enough of an impression just by its length. In the spaces between the columns, there were all these red flags with the swastika, which made a wonderful ornament. It is bad to use it now, but as an ornament it was good, you know, by chance much more fitting than a flag like the *tricolore*. The whole space behind and in between the columns was filled with flags, tightly hung and floodlit at nighttime. They were also lit from the outside, along the street front, forming a long curtain, which also provided an attraction. The scene in action was constantly changing and colorful.⁴

What we said about the Zeppelinfeld applies even more to

the scenographies you created for the Nazi celebration of May 1 at Tempelhof.

Well, there was not much time to do anything like a normal architectural work. There were only a few weeks left. It was the first time I had used just flags, of huge dimension, and it was more or less like a stage set, you know, with the floodlights. There were about one million people assembled there, in a space six or seven kilometers long, so to make something impressive for those who were standing hundreds of meters away, it was necessary to make something very large. These lights had that effect. What was especially impressive was that I put the lights on when it was still day-time, so that you could not see that it was lighted, and slowly, as it became darker and darker, and finally completely dark, you got the full impression.

But was this just a scenographic idea or had you thought of it before in some way?

No, it was just of that moment. It was actually done in one night, designed in one night. I was asked to do something, and in one night I made the drawings, sketches in color, and designed the floodlights.⁵

In Erinnerung you recall how important it was to discover the fascination of ruins. The remains of your buildings in Nuremberg today have the shape of classic ruins, though not the spirit, it seems.

The Romans built arches of triumph or huge buildings to celebrate the big victories won by the Roman empire, while Hitler built them to celebrate victories he had not yet won.⁶ But I think that it is not inappropriate to make huge buildings for the state. Of course nowadays you don't know who is responsible for what, and things cost too much and as a result, other things suffer. But if one compares the total sum now spent every year on construction with the sum spent for those buildings—I forget now how much, but it is much less, percentage-wise, than the construction budget of a modern state.

It is a commonplace to consider your architecture as the most typical expression of Nazi architecture. As a matter of fact, you yourself upheld the necessity for diversity in

architectural styles, and the magazines of the time contain examples which show a great variation in the language employed by the architects during Nazism. For instance, Rimpl's industrial architecture . . .

He was assistant to Mies van der Rohe.

This brings up another problem. We would like to know if the control of the Nazi propaganda apparatus was in fact limited just to the most representative works of the new regime.

I think that to me and to others it seemed quite a natural thing, it went without saying, that a state building should represent the state, its power, the successes of Hitler's time and so on. That other buildings should have a different expression is quite normal. And to me it was absolutely normal that when I was building my own house, for my own use, that it was a nice small house in the American colonial style, which was not such a common style in those times. Similarly, when there was a factory to be built, there was a certain technical necessity that governed its style; to have done it in such a way that it resembled my state architecture would have been ridiculous. Rimpl designed wonderful, large buildings for Heinkel. His cultural attitude was classic, and Hitler admired it. The proportions were wonderful and natural for the purpose so that we did not need to discuss it further.⁷

Was there any specific control on architectural production during the Nazi period?

No, normally in every town we had, as we have now, a building police, which made sure that buildings were properly designed. Particularly in some of the smaller districts, they were strict about the amount of control they imposed on the architects. In northern Germany buildings had to be built of brick, not plaster, because this was the tradition there; also the windows had to have this or that size, as in the old times, as was then, and still now, really suited for housing. But when it comes to bigger projects, like the administration building in Berlin or a new factory, they did not have much to say.

Therefore, the task of the police was only to check that the rules were observed in the normal building production?

44 They were mainly there to insure that things were handled in a normal way—things like calculations for the steel beams. This was the main task they had. Of course, every bureaucratic system tries to expand.

In considering some particular features of building production during the Third Reich, what is striking is the radical change in the attitude toward popular building. Instead of the great Siedlungen of the Weimar period in Berlin and Frankfurt, we see a very different kind of residential building. For instance, in the Kleine-Siedlungen, the residential standards are much inferior. What were the economic and social reasons that caused this change?

That goes back to the early times, the times of Damaschen. He was a politician on the left, and he claimed that everybody should have his own small garden and so on. Tessenow was closely connected with him and Schmittener had similar ideas. They all were opposed to large dwellings, like the ones six stories high and two or three hundred meters long that Taut did, for instance. And there was already a demonstration prior to 1933, a non-political demonstration over a district in Berlin that Taut and others had built, which featured a long continuous block organized in this uniform way. Then another group of architects, including several architects like Schmittener, Tessenow—I forget the other names, created an example of how they thought it should be. It is still extant in Berlin.

Yes, the Onkel-Toms-Hütte Siedlung, which includes small dwellings by Tessenow, Schmittener, Poelzig . . . It was considered a demonstration project. The one that Taut did was carried out under the auspices of the GEHAG whereas the other buildings were sponsored by a socialist organization.⁸

A number of residential buildings of the Nazi period, like Ramersdorf in Munich and the Siedlung built by Bonatz in opposition to the Weissenhof, seem to be an expression of a deeply anti-urban culture.

It is the same attitude that is present in Tessenow's booklet about small towns, and the same that you find nowa-

days in the suburbs of the United States where, spreading out for miles and miles, everybody has his small house with a little bit of garden. If the whole activity of building houses had not been stopped after the war, there would have been more communities of this type. But it is not an architectural phenomenon; there is no architectural impression in it.

While in the Weimar period the Siedlungen were planned by the great architects, the Kleine-Siedlungen were designed according to very simple and traditional typologies—they almost look like “spontaneous architecture.” This also raises some questions about the methods of producing this kind of building; how did Nazism use the experience of the cooperative movement that developed in the Weimar period? For instance, what happened to the GEHAG and the other cooperative societies?

I can't tell you what happened, I don't know. Basically, this idea that everybody should have his small garden and live independently in his own town, comes from the kind of people who are usually bound to the soil and these people are never considered to be radicals.

We see, perhaps, behind the change in the approach to the housing problem during the Third Reich and in the different role taken by architecture the influence of the Volk idea of culture, of the Volk tradition . . .

I can't say too much what was behind this, I was not involved, but it goes back to quite early times, to what was already being done in Essen.⁹

How was urban policy managed during Nazism?

There was, strangely enough, town planning on a large scale and all the questions connected with it. There were departments of the Reich Arbeit Ministerium with experts who had been there from before 1933 and remained on.

Coming to some specific questions, could you explain the importance of Gottfried Feder in the evolution of Nazi ideology?

No importance at all, he was a ridiculous person. He was even more ridiculous in his own time than he is considered

now. His book is not so bad. I have read it several times. Have you read it?

Actually we have not, but we have often seen it quoted in historical texts on the period, and we have read of the direct influence of Feder on Hitler's thought.

No, he did not have any influence at all on Hitler. Hitler did not see him anymore after he was given his post at the university in Berlin, where he had his income and made some studies about facilities for one thousand people, facilities for doctors, nurseries, etc. Actually, he made some quite interesting studies.

In recent studies on Nazi architecture, as for instance Taylor's book The Word in Stone, we often read about the influence that Rosenberg's book Der Mythos des XX Jahrhunderts had on the architectural culture of the Nazi period. Do you think this is an interesting reading key? Not in my opinion. I certainly did not read that book, it was too dull. I think the point is exaggerated. Certainly several people, including architects, did read it, but Rosenberg had no influence on architectural work. Rosenberg was an architect himself, but Hitler ridiculed him as an architect. He blocked him from exerting any influence because he wanted to exert his own influence, not that of second-hand help. Hitler did not like him very much, he was really too much inclined to the Doric style, not the northern.¹⁰

There is a fundamental and somewhat misleading issue in contemporary discussion on Nazi architecture: that the architects were drastically divided into two political classes, the "collaborationists" and the "persecutees." The most typical representatives of this second class would be Gropius and Mies We think it would be useful to explain what the attitude of the Nazi regime was toward these leading representatives of the architectural culture. The fact that they left Germany, in your opinion, was a result of political pressure or of other factors of a more professional nature?

Well, already in Tessenow's times there was a split between those who more or less thought in traditional terms and those who, like Gropius, thought in terms of mass

production of furniture and prefabrication. They did not really do it, but the idea was already in some minds. From Gropius's Weimar period and the Bauhaus, it was supposed that they were inclined to Communism. So they were disliked, but there was no real reason to dislike them because they might not necessarily have been of this persuasion. In the field of landscape architecture, there was Professor Martin: after 1933 he was in charge of the garden exhibition (every year a garden exhibition is held in a different town in Germany). He was a Communist, but he stayed on in the same job. I guess the case is similar to Mies van der Rohe, because he stayed till '38 in Germany and tried to get some clients, as Scharoun did. Scharoun remained in Germany too working on his own ideas and doing some housing. But with Gropius, it was a political question, I guess.

Is it possible that this "political question" is also connected with the fact that Gropius saw his power greatly reduced after the fusion of the B.D.A. and the Kampfbund?

The Kampfbund lost its power too, after a short while.

Do you think that Gropius left Germany because he was excluded from professional activity? And in order to make the picture clearer, could you explain the terms of the conflict between the Bund des Deutschen Architekten, whose president Gropius had been at one time, and the Kampfbund?

I don't know what would have happened to Gropius if he had submitted to Hitler's regime. I don't know because at the time Hitler and his party tried to make use of some of the Communists, if they were so disposed. It is not true that every Communist was in danger. But with Gropius things were more complicated. Both Gropius and Schultze-Naumburg were in Weimar. Schultze-Naumburg was the man behind the Kampfbund ideology and he and Gropius hated each other even before 1933. But what Gropius never knew till later was that Schultze-Naumburg was not very much liked by Hitler because his ideas and his official style for representing Germany were different from Hitler's own. His was a more bourgeois style. A building, he said, was not German if it had no roof.

46 There was a discussion about the fact that the Weissenhof had no roof, which upset Schultze-Naumburg very much. But Hitler considered the ideas of the Kampfbund as not really in his line, and did not protect Schultze-Naumburg. So the power of the Kampfbund got less and less, and I sometimes think it deserved it. They opposed me when I gave Peter Behrens the commission for an administration building for AEG. But I asked Hitler and he said: "He is a good architect, he did the embassy in Petersburg and I like him, but is he of the Kampfbund?" I replied, "No, Peter Behrens has had Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier as students." Hitler never said, "How dare he?", although this was the major case to be brought against Behrens.¹¹

Goebbels played a very controversial role in the Nazi cultural policy. Could you explain his attitude toward the issues concerning architectural culture?

Goebbels was cautious and he realized that Hitler was so interested in the architectural business; so much at the head of the architectural development, that he kept out of it. He did not want to interfere.¹²

Hildegard Brenner hints at probable relations between the B.D.A., Gropius in particular, and Goebbels . . .

I don't know.

Do you think this is likely to be true?

It is quite possible.

Let us come back to a previous assertion of yours. You said that Rimpl was an assistant of Mies.

Yes, in some way he was. In the U.S.A., I think in a university in New York, there is a woman who has made a study about the time when Mies van der Rohe was in Germany. I don't know if it is published or not. She made quite a lot of studies in Germany, trying to find out what Mies was doing, and she told me that Rimpl was a close collaborator of Mies in his studio.

Before going on to another subject, what did you think when the Bauhaus closed?

What did I think? I thought that it was right. But I would

have thought the same even if it had not had anything to do with Hitler and his party. I am sure that Tessenow felt the same. It was contrary to all his ideas.

Even when the Bauhaus was directed by Mies van der Rohe?

Mies van der Rohe was considered altogether another type. In Gropius's time, the Bauhaus was crude, but Mies made a real step forward for modern design with his pavilion in Barcelona, by reintroducing valuable materials like marble and finely profiled and highly polished windows. This was opposite to Gropius's ideas, but then he too changed his mind in the U.S.A., where he began to define his own style of architecture.

Strangely enough, you seem to identify the Bauhaus with Gropius. But after Gropius and before Mies van der Rohe, Hannes Meyer was the director of the Bauhaus. Do you identify the Bauhaus exclusively with Gropius?

Yes, it is Gropius. I have no impression of what Hannes Meyer did.

Going on to another subject, we would like to ask you what Todt's role was, not only in the building of the German road system, but, more generally, in the public works policy during Nazism.

No, Todt was really a different thing. He came to power when the secret line was being built, the fortifications against France. As for the Autobahns, they were built, as is normal with large enterprises, by the big firms of Germany, under the supervision of the administration. It was just a normal event, done as it is now, and as it always has been done.¹³

Did Todt have an important part in the building policy of the time?

No, not in housing policy. His department was founded for the purpose of restoring big buildings quickly, repairing destroyed bridges, etc., as is necessary in wartime. It was operational in the Polish campaign and so on. They followed the troops, reconstructing roads and bridges and railways.



2 Hitler looking at Speer's architectural plans in the architect's atelier, Obersalzberg, spring 1934.

Did Todt's organization play an important role in the new planning of conquered territories, especially in the west?

No, that was Himmler's organization. Later on, this became part of Todt's organization, for by the time it had begun to take on the responsibility for building everything in Germany, it was already too late to deal with any housing problems.¹⁴

Todt's organization was also engaged in the building of industrial and military installations.

Yes, rebuilding damaged factories and so on.

Let us come to another figure in the regime who seemed to influence the choices made in the urbanistic field and in planning, Walter Darré . . .

He was important for agricultural work. I have seen his houses for farmers, but they are not different from what was done anywhere else. His way of thinking about housing for small villages and towns did not differ from the traditional way of thinking.

Darré also attended the annual conferences of the architects. Were you there?

No, I was too busy.

Could you tell us about your relationship with Hitler. Who was the real architect of the buildings you made?

It is quite apparent. After a short while, after I did several things for him, he was convinced I was a great architect. And that was quite an exception. Normally with architects, he wanted to see their plans. He used to cor-

rect them (I have many of his sketches), and insert his own ideas into their designs. The architects would, more or less, execute his wishes—change the facades, for instance—but with me he did not insist on this. Already with the Zeppelinfeld, and then with the Stadium, he allowed me to have my own way. It was quite astonishing, but sometimes he said I should do something in a different way, and I would feel obliged to change the designs to his ideas, but the next time I brought them to him I was able to discuss the changes freely with him and often he would decide that my way of doing should be realized after all. In the Chancellery he did not interfere at all. He would visit the building sites of course, but he did not interfere.¹⁵

Which is the most important of your buildings?

Among those which were executed, the Chancellery is the most interesting work in my opinion; of those not executed, I would say the Stadium.¹⁶

Did you work alone on the Berlin plan?

No, Hitler did the greater part of the Berlin plan and the town planning of the new center for public buildings. He derived some of his ideas from his impressions of the Ringstrasse in Vienna. I was not very familiar with it, and I freely admitted that his ideas were better than mine. He admired the way the Ringstrasse buildings were simple, like monuments—every building is on its own, part of a series of independent buildings which relate to each other. And Hitler wanted Berlin to be built in a similar way.¹⁷

We have the impression that the Berlin you imagined is an empty capital, a city emptied to make room for the monuments. A really radical form of zoning . . .

I too thought that the buildings would be too large and that the street would be empty and devoid of life. The official administration building, which contains most of the ministries, was to be built along this stretch, four or five kilometers long; this would have filled the whole street on both sides. And as it turned out, the ministries got only one-third of the building and the remaining two-thirds were reserved for another kind of administration, like AEG, Siemens, etc. Certain rooms on the ground floor

48 were to have had shop windows but these were not allowed to make up more than a certain percentage of the whole length, so that the remainder could be rented to other people in order to get some life into it. The idea was to create the impression of a modern street in a modern city. There were also theaters and huge cinemas to bring life in, a quarter with colored lamps, and squares to serve as islands of calm with small shops around them. I wanted to bring in some life so as not to have just an exhibition of huge buildings. And this axis was only a small part of the whole. The main idea of the plan was modeled on what the Russian and Spanish architects were doing with the endless axis—placing huge buildings along both sides of a street which gradually diminished in height. I think this is the only solution if you want to have public transit facilities really making a profit, like an underground railway for instance, because as it works out now in the residential outskirts, the density of the population is not sufficient to justify the investment. But if you have a high density of population lining both sides of an axis, it is possible to serve them with an efficient underground system. This helps to free the ground level; this was the idea for Berlin.

In the definition of the Berlin plan what was the importance of decisions concerning the reorganization of the traffic and railway systems?

The railway system, of course, had to be done by experts from the tram railways administration. I could not have done it myself, though I contributed some ideas.

It seems to us that the Berlin plan brings out a basic question of the relation between architectural, technical, and economic choices and political aims. How was this entanglement of problems managed technically?

There was a special organization under my command, built up independently. I had one small office, a small studio with only eight or ten architects working on plans which I did personally as an architect. Then I had an office for the rebuilding of Berlin with about thirty people, many of whom had studied with Tessenow. And then there was a third office, which became necessary in 1938 when the actual building plans were getting under way. That was

the office for the execution of buildings, a huge office under the command of the former chief of the entire building administration in Nuremberg.

Was there any basic economic program?

No, Hitler did not want anybody to know how much this huge work cost, he was afraid of the reactions of the *burghers*. So I did not tell when I was asked how much it cost. He said to the minister of finance, "We shall see, I can't tell you now." Otherwise, he would have been shocked.

Did you ever come up against economic problems in your buildings at that time?

No, I made a small note then of how much it would have cost compared with the salaries of workers for a month. It was not so much. It would have been amortized over ten or twelve years.

Didn't you know how much you were going to spend for the buildings in Nuremberg?

Of course I knew and Hitler did too.¹⁸

We would like to come back to the question we first raised about the Berlin plan. During Nazism was there a planning system on a national scale which would account for major urbanistic interventions, such as the Berlin plan?

No, no. The social prospect of Germany as a whole was not influenced by those building activities for Berlin or for Nuremberg. For Berlin I received sixty thousand marks every year and all the other expenses were distributed between different administrations who had to pay from their own budgets, in order to have a place on this grand axis. If it was AEG, Peter Behrens's buildings were paid for by AEG. The building of the road itself was the task of the Berlin town administration. Now, if somebody wanted to build something, they had the high cost of buying a site in town, tearing down what was there, and putting up the new thing. It cost much more than when AEG bought the site for its headquarters there. The whole of industry was really flourishing in Germany and there was plenty of money. Everyone was paying attention to representing themselves well. So I had takers for

all the property along this axis after a short while.

We would like to ask you a few questions that are less complex. Could you give some opinion on Hjalmar Schacht's role in the construction of the Nazi economic system?

Really I am not familiar with this. He was a very rude man. I studied his ideas, but I really can't answer.

Have you ever met him?

I met him in Nuremberg. When I saw him, I shook hands with him, and that's all.

Could you explain the operation of the Goering-Werke and give us some information about the city planned for the workers employed in the Goering-Werke plants?

The Goering factory. Well, we were short of iron ore and had to import it from Sweden and Norway, but this became dangerous in wartime, so we had to curtail the supply. We had very poor quality iron ore in our home mines, and we knew that the whole process of making steel would be very costly with such poor ore, and that we would not be able to compete with the industries in other countries. So our steel concerns were not interested in developing a steel factory based on this ore. Therefore Hitler ordered Goering to develop one with state capital. This was the start of the Hermann Goering-Werke, and, of course, the factory was built and had many thousand workers. There was an urgent need to house them, and it was decided that a new town should be provided as in the case of the Volkswagen-Werke.

But Goering's organization changed into a great enterprise.

Yes, but always with the end of producing steel. This escalated when Austria became united with Germany. Of course, such things were always expanding. They were buying this and that, and so they grew larger and larger.

Was it owned by the state?

Not really owned; it was a joint stock company in which the main shareholder was the state.

This remains one of the clearest examples of state intervention in the industrial policy during Nazism.

This is one, and the other, of course, was Volkswagen. You can also see it in the production of synthetic rubber and oil from coal. Such things could only be done with the economic aid of the state.

What level did state power attain in the industrial policy of the whole country?

Fundamentally, Hitler was convinced that the best industrial policy should not be based on state-owned industry but on privately owned factories because he was afraid of bureaucracy. He realized that state ownership of a large number of factories at the same time can be dangerous since it tends to bureaucratize administration. It had to be done now and then, but whenever possible, it was avoided—for instance, control of the production of synthetic rubber and synthetic fuel was still left to private enterprise.¹⁹

One more question. It seems to be proved that housing and social service production fell heavily during Nazism as compared to the standards attained in the Weimar period. Are there any specific political reasons besides the economic ones which can explain this fact?

No, other than that the needs for military purpose were tremendous. To build up factories and barracks for the new armies was really a very large task, as were the building of the fortifications in the west and the Autobahn. All these things took away from the overall construction potential so that housing certainly suffered.

Except where otherwise noted, all quotes in these notes are from Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970).

1. English version: Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970).

2. In the autumn of 1925 Speer began his architectural studies at the Institute of Technology in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Heinrich Tessenow, who became a professor there in the spring of 1926, was to be Speer's teacher and life-long mentor. Not only did Tessenow's work correspond to the National Socialist concern for the creation of a *Heimatstil*, but in 1931 he went so far as to declare that "Someone will have to come along who thinks very simply. Thinking today has become too complicated. An uncultured man, a peasant as it were, would solve everything much more easily merely because he would still be unspoiled. He would also have the strength to carry out his simple ideas" (p. 15). Despite this overt anticipation of a *Führer* figure, Tessenow's attitude to Nazi ideology seems to have remained ambiguous, so much so that in 1933 his connections to the Cassirer circle made him suspect and he was barred from teaching.

3. It is clear that Speer's career as architect laureate to the NSDAP began with Troost's death.

4. Speer's initial work for the first Party Rally in Nuremberg was decidedly scenographic. His extensive use of banners, his provision of a giant eagle whose wing span was over one hundred feet, his "cathedral of ice" created at night out of a perimeter of searchlights surrounding the square parade ground were all enthusiastically received by Hitler. Of this last item Speer writes: "The actual effect far surpassed anything I had imagined. The hundred and thirty sharply defined beams, placed around the field at intervals of forty feet, were visible to a height of twenty to twenty-five thousand feet, after which they merged into a general glow. The feeling was of a vast room, with the beams serving as mighty pillars of infinitely high outer walls. Now and then a cloud moved through this wreath of lights, bringing an element of surrealistic surprise to the mirage. I imagine that this 'cathedral of light' was the first luminescent architecture of this type, and for me it remains not only my most beautiful architectural concept but, after its fashion, the only one which has survived the passage of time" (p. 59).

5. Speer writes: "I happened to see a sketch on his [Hanke's] desk of the decorations for the night rally that was to be held at Tempelhof Field on May 1. The designs outraged both my revolutionary and my architectural feelings. 'Those look like the decorations for a rifle club meet.' I exclaimed. Hanke replied: 'If you can do better, go to it.' That same night I sketched a large platform and behind it three mighty banners, each of them taller than a ten-story building, stretched between wooden struts: two of the banners would be black-white-red with the swastika banner between them. (A rather risky idea, for in a strong wind those banners would act like sails.) They were to be illuminated by powerful searchlights. The sketch was accepted immediately, and once more I had moved a step ahead. Full of pride, I showed my drawings to Tessenow. But he remained fixed in his ideal of solid craftsmanship. 'Do you think you have created something? It's showy, that's all'" (pp. 26-27).

6. The Zeppelin Field Stadium was the first structure erected

by Speer after his "theory of ruin value." Realizing that reinforced concrete structures would of necessity make very poor ruins, Speer recommended that the monumental Party buildings at Nuremberg be constructed out of masonry and be built according to time honored principles of statics. The idea was that the Third Reich, like the other great civilizations of the past, should in its turn yield sublime ruins. Speer even projected the Zeppelin Field as a ruin, its fallen columns overgrown with ivy. Hitler accepted Speer's thesis and gave instructions that all future state buildings be built in accordance with Speer's "law of the ruins."

7. The Third Reich developed and propagated a number of different styles chiefly according to the ideology of the circumstance. First and foremost was the neoclassical State style as developed in the work of Troost and Speer, used in Troost's "honor temples" on the Königsplatz, Munich, and later Speer's State Chancellery in Berlin. A hybrid medievalizing style was created for the Ordensburg, those remotely situated "order castles" which were dedicated to the training of NSDAP functionaries drawn from the ranks. The productive elements in any industrial plant were of course always executed in a *sachlich*, functionalist manner, while the factory administration buildings were invariably rendered in a crypto-classical form. (See Herbert Rimpl's Heinkel factory, Oranienberg.) Workers' housing on the other hand was executed in the *Heimatstil* manner, complete with pitched roof, window shutters, etc., the *Heimatstil* undoubtedly taking its cue from the domestic work of Tessenow.

8. In her book *Architecture and Politics in Germany* (Harvard, 1968) Barbara Miller Lane writes: "The Gehag was founded in 1924 as a merger of several older building societies, with additional capital from the Berlin trade unions and the Berlin Wohnungsfürsorgegesellschaft. Its leading spirit was Martin Wagner, director of one of the subsections of the municipal building administration in Berlin-Schöneberg and a pioneer in the development of economical methods of building construction. Wagner was dissatisfied with Berlin's progress in low-cost public housing, and he envisioned a union of all Berlin's building societies in order to construct efficiently very large-scale housing developments. Although he was himself a member of the SPD and deeply involved in a movement for a kind of guild socialism in the building trades, Wagner did not intend that the Gehag should have a political orientation. He was able, however, to enlist only a few building societies; the majority of the Gehag's capital came from the Socialist trade unions and Wagner's own socialized building trades movement, and most of its officials were Socialists. At Wagner's request, the society hired Bruno Taut in 1924, and its entire housing program was carried on under his direction until 1933, when he, like May, went to Russia to plan new cities" (p. 104).

Miller Lane also adds the following footnote: "The best available information on the Gehag is in *Gehag: Gemeinnützige Heimstätten-Aktiengesellschaft 1924-1957* (Berlin, 1957), since most of the organization's records were confiscated and destroyed after the war by the East German government. One German building society also located in Berlin was as large as the Gehag: the 'Gagfah' or Gemeinnützige Aktiengesellschaft für Angestellten-Heimstätten, which consistently built in a conservative style

and often employed such prominent prewar housing designers as Schmitthenner and Tessenow. See *16000 Wohnungen für Angestellte* (Berlin, 1928)."

9. The Krupp concern in Essen started to build *Siedlungen* for their workers soon after 1868. The first of these was the Alterheide development of 1870 orthogonally laid out partly as free-standing houses and partly as terraces. Krupp later built other more irregularly planned garden colonies with integrated social facilities (churches, schools, recreation grounds, etc.) such as Alfredshof (1864-1918), Margaretenhof (1903), Altenhof (1908-1910), and finally Margaretenhöhe (1909-1913).

10. Hitler's own cultural preference was Greek rather than medieval, which may explain his hostility to Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century* which sold hundreds of thousands of copies. Hitler regarded the Rosenberg thesis as "a relapse into medieval notions!"

11. Hitler seems to have been equally disaffected by the *Heimatstil* approach of Paul Schultze-Naumburg, whose written texts certainly played a salient role in developing the NSDAP ideology in respect to architecture. Of Schultze-Naumburg's sketch for a Party forum Hitler is supposed to have remarked, according to Speer: "It looks like an oversized marketplace for a provincial town. There's nothing distinctive about it, nothing that sets it off from former times. If we are going to build a Party forum, we want people to be able to see centuries hence that our times had a certain building style, like the Königsplatz in Munich, for example" (p. 22).

12. Of the Goebbels assignment Speer writes: "I was given the assignment to redo the minister's house and also to add a large hall. To decorate the Goebbels house I borrowed a few watercolors by Nolde from Eberhard Hanfstaengl, the director of the Berlin National Gallery. Goebbels and his wife were delighted with the paintings—until Hitler came to inspect and expressed his severe disapproval. Then the Minister summoned me immediately: 'The pictures have to go at once; they're simply impossible!'"

13. Dr. Todt, a civil engineer and designer of the Autobahn, was one of the most important technocrats of the Third Reich. He was the supreme head of all road building operations and in charge of navigable waterways. He was also in charge of building the West Wall and U-boat shelters along the Atlantic. As Hitler's direct envoy he was also Minister of Armaments and Munitions. After Todt's death in a plane accident, Speer succeeded him and according to his account, his relations with Hitler changed from this point. Speer writes: "Hitherto, Hitler had displayed a kind of fellowship toward me as an architect. Now a new phase was perceptibly beginning. From the first moment on he was establishing the aloofness of an official relationship to a minister who was his subordinate" (p. 195).

14. Speer writes: "Hitler's ideas about the political constitution of his 'Teutonic Empire of the German Nation' still seemed quite vague, but he had already made up his mind about one point: In the immediate vicinity of the Norwegian city of Trondheim, which offered a particularly favorable strategic position, the largest German naval base was to arise. Along with shipyards and docks a city for a quarter of a million Germans would be built and incorporated into the German Reich. Hitler had com-

missioned me to do the planning. Thus he disposed at will of territories, interests, and rights belonging to others; by now he was totally convinced of his world dominion. In this connection I must mention his plan for founding German cities in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. On November 24, 1941, in the very midst of the winter catastrophe, Gauleiter Meyer, deputy of Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister for the occupied eastern territories, asked me to take over the section on 'new cities' and plan and build the settlements for the German garrisons and civil administrations. I finally refused this offer at the end of January 1942 on the grounds that a central authority for city planning would inevitably lead to a uniformity of pattern. I instead suggested that the great German cities each stand as sponsor for the construction of the new ones" (p. 182).

15. Hitler's relationships with the architects he employed varied a great deal. With the exception of Troost and Speer who were invariably given a free hand, he rarely accepted any scheme at first submission. The former enjoyed this privilege because Hitler respected him as a teacher and the latter because Hitler obviously identified with the younger man's talent. According to Speer Hitler once told him: "You attracted my notice during our rounds. I was looking for an architect to whom I could entrust my building plans. I wanted someone young; for as you know, these plans extend far into the future. I need someone who will be able to continue after my death with the authority I have conferred on him. I saw you as that man." In his obsession with posterity Hitler wished to create permanent works that would carry his ideology into the German future. Other than Speer, Troost seems to have been the only architect whom Hitler respected without reservation. Hitler's reverence for Troost almost lost Bonatz his practice under the Third Reich, as a result of the critical attitude Bonatz had adopted toward Troost's "honor temples." Only Frau Troost's intercession on Bonatz's behalf succeeded in finally obtaining the Autobahn bridge commission for him.

16. Speer writes: "For the buildings in Nuremberg I had in mind a synthesis between Troost's classicism and Tessenow's simplicity. I did not call it neoclassicist, but neoclassical, for I thought I had derived it from the Dorian style. I was deluding myself, deliberately forgetting that these buildings had to provide a monumental backdrop such as had already been attempted on the Champs de Mars in Paris during the French Revolution, although the resources at that time were more modest. Terms like 'classical' and 'simple' were scarcely consonant with the gigantic proportions I employed in Nuremberg. Yet, to this day I still like my Nuremberg sketches best of all, rather than many others that I later prepared for Hitler and that turned out considerably more practical" (p. 62).

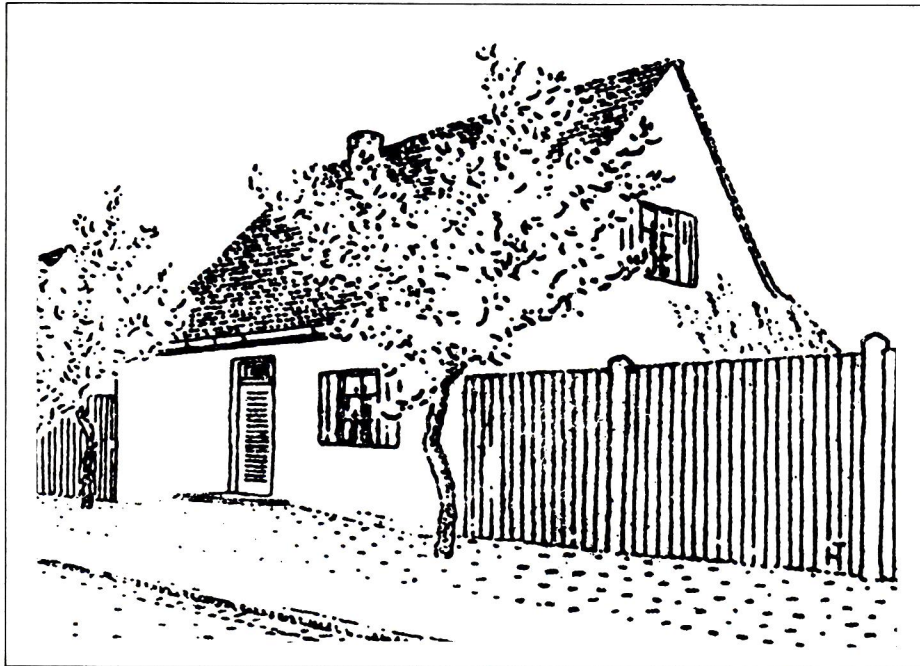
17. The primary focus of Speer's architectural 'collaboration' with Hitler was their joint master plan for Berlin which Hitler hoped would be complete in time for a world exhibition to be staged there in 1950. In *Inside the Third Reich* Speer disingenuously presents himself as a single-minded technocrat, as opposed to Hitler who was only interested in his own design for a 380-foot high triumphal arch and the three and a half mile vista (two and half times the length of the Champs Elysées) passing through the arch and linking the new southern railway terminus

to the Great Hall. On the other hand, Speer does seem to have collaborated closely with the technocrat planner Kurt Leibbrand (see Leibbrand, *Transportation and Town Planning* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970]) in an effort to integrate this monumental axis into Leibbrand's comprehensive traffic plan for greater Berlin. Leibbrand's strategy was to eliminate the separate railway termini left by the nineteenth century and feed the Berlin radial rail network into an enlarged Ringbahn, which would then channel all train traffic to the new northern and southern termini situated at either end of the great axis. It says something for Hitler's megalomania that the Great Dome would have effectively blocked the strategic route linking these two termini. Aside from this, reorganization and demolition of the nineteenth century termini would have provided space for the accommodation of five hundred thousand people. That the whole approach was Haussmannian is evident from the only part of the scheme to be realized, namely the landscaping of the Gr nwald which provided an amenity comparable to the Bois de Boulogne. As far as the Berlin Plan was concerned, Speer, as Inspector General of Buildings for the Renovation of the Federal Capital, was answerable to no one except Hitler. He divided his day between the Plan project office and his Pariserplatz city planning office, where he assigned major commissions to architects such as Bonatz, Wilhelm Kreis, German Bestelmeyer, and Peter Behrens. The plan was scheduled to have cost six billion Reichsmark which, spread over eleven years, would have amounted to a twenty-fifth of the total annual volume of work carried out by the German construction industry. The best part of this sum would have been provided by the State but the monumental works—the dome and the arch—were to be met by private donations.

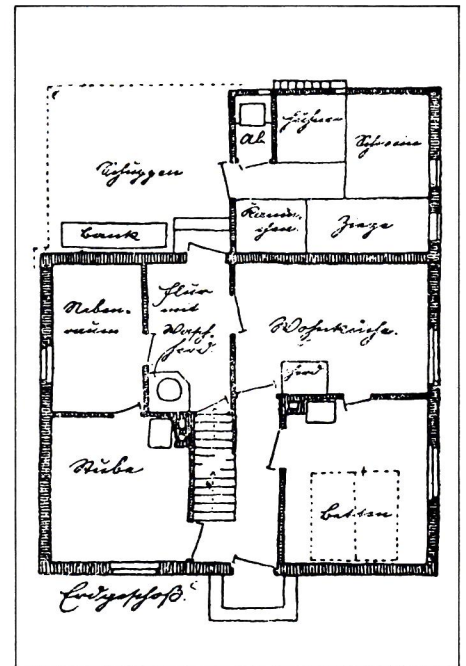
18. Speer's project for the Nuremberg Party Rally site received an award at the Paris World's Fair in 1937. Of its cost Speer writes: "The plan called for an expenditure of between seven and eight hundred million marks on building, which today would cost three billion marks (\$750,000,000)—eight years later I would be spending such a sum every four days on armaments." The complex comprised the thirty-four hundred by twenty-three hundred foot Marchfeld, seating one hundred and sixty-thousand, its title being a reference not only to the god of war but also to the month in which conscription had been introduced. Other works included a stadium seating four hundred thousand, a quarter of a mile long parade avenue faced in granite, and a Kulturhalle. Granite to the cost of several million marks was ordered for this work, pink for the exteriors, white for the stands.

19. Initially there was a continuation of certain Weimar Republic policies into the Nazi period since the Third Reich took its middle level leadership partly from the Weimar bureaucracy and partly from an elite made up of the Imperial Army and the Reichswehr. As far as industry was concerned, it depended on the conciliatory leadership of trade unions, progressive industrialists, and the technocrats. The ultimate NSDAP aim however was to replace this provisional leadership with ideologically conditioned party graduates educated in the Ordensburgen.

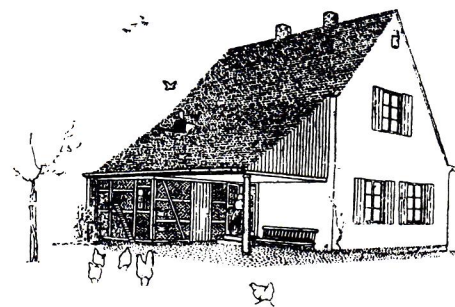
- 1, 2, 39, 46 Reprinted from Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970).
- 3–7, 10, 13, 14, 16, 18–21 Reprinted from Gerda Wangerin, Gerhard Weiss, *Heinrich Tessenow* (Essen: Verlag Richard Bacht GmbH, 1976).
- 8, 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 34–38, 43–45, 47, 66, 70, 71, 74–77, 80 Courtesy Francesco Dal Co.
- 9 Reprinted from Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Berlin: Bauten und Entwürfe* (Berlin West: Rembrandt Verlag, 1973).
- 15 Reprinted from Alfred Reitdorf, *Gilly: Widergeburt der Architektur* (Berlin: Hans von Hugo Verlag, 1940).
- 17 Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mies van der Rohe Archive.
- 23, 78 Richard Klapheck, *Neue Baukunst in den Rheinlanden* (Dusseldorf: Verlag L. Schwann, 1928).
- 26 Reprinted from *Die Bauzeitung*, 32, November 5, 1935.
- 27, 67 Reprinted from Frederic V. Grunfeld, *The Hitler File* (New York: Random House, 1974).
- 30 Reprinted from *Lotus*, 16, September 1970.
- 31 Reprinted from Jiří Kroha, Jiří Hruza, *Sovětská Architektonická Avantgarda* (Prague: Odeon, 1973).
- 32 Reprinted from *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, eds., D. Alfieri, L. Freddi (Rome: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1933).
- 33 Reprinted from *Das Bauen im Neuen Reich* (Bayreuth: Gauverlag Bayerische Ostmark, GmbH., 1938).
- 40, 79, 80 Reprinted from Albert Speer, *Neue Deutsche Baukunst* (Amsterdam: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1943).
- 41, 42 Reprinted from Albert Speer, *Die Neue Reichskanzlei* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, n.d.).
- 48–52, 54–61 Reprinted from *Ein deutsches Flugzeugwerk: Architekt Herbert Rimpl—Die Heinkel-Werke Oranienburg*, Hermann Mäckler, ed. (Berlin: Wiking Verlag, n.d.).
- 53 Reprinted from Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1947).
- 62 Reprinted from Friedrich Tamms, *Paul Bonatz, Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1907 bis 1937* (Stuttgart: J. Hoffmann, 1937).
- 63, 64 Reprinted from Paul Bonatz, Karl Schaechterle, Friedrich Tamms, *Gestaltungsaufgaben beim Brückenbau der Reichsautobahn* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1936).
- 65 Reprinted from Fritz Hoerber, *Peter Behrens* (Munich: Georg Müller und Eugen Rentsch, 1913).
- 68 Reprinted from Hans Stephan, *Wilhelm Kreis* (Oldenburg: G. Stöling, 1944).
- 69 Reprinted from Anna Teut, *Architektur im Dritten Reich 1933–1945* (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1967).
- 72 Reprinted from Helen Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1976).
- 73 Reprinted from *Oppositions* 5, Summer 1976.
- 81 Reprinted from Joseph Borkin, *The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).



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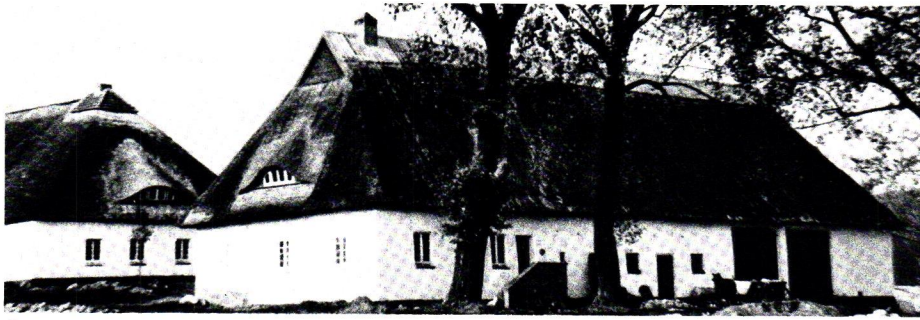


5

Tessenow and the Image of the Heimat

The whole development of the so-called *Heimatstil* is inseparable from the career of Heinrich Tessenow who was Albert Speer's teacher. Tessenow's own attempt to develop a *Heimatstil* was evident long before the Nazi party came into power.

3, 4, 5 Tessenow's design for an economic homestead for Rähnitz, near Dresden, 1919. Street view, ground plan, and garden view. 6, 7, 8 A selection of Tessenow's designs for rural dwellings. View from garden (1919) and aerial perspective (1913). Bruno Taut was one of the first to remark on the Oriental influence in Tessenow's work, evident in the Shinto-like fence enclosing the garden.



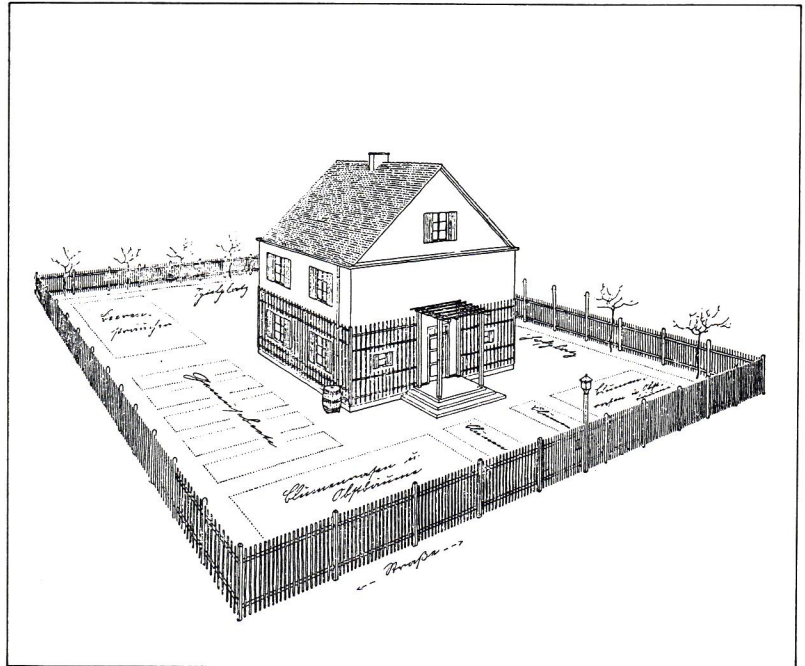
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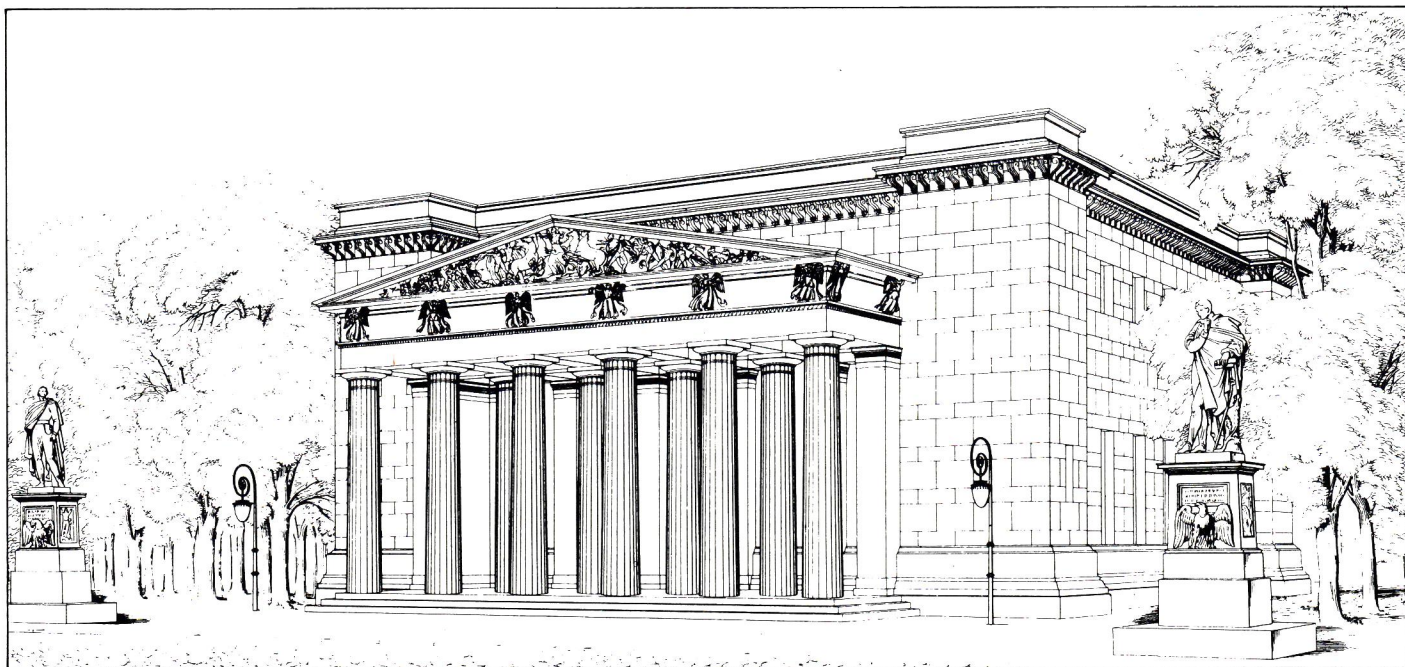
Schultze-Naumburg and the Cult of the Earth

It is worth remarking at this juncture on the ideological role played by the Werkbund founder Schultze-Naumburg in the evolution of the Heimatstil. Unlike Tessenow, Naumburg seems to have given overt racial connotations to the evolution of this "home style," particularly toward the end of the twenties when he began to write his books on art, identity, and culture, namely Art and Race of 1928 and Face of the German House of 1929. In this last book he wrote: "The German house gives one the feeling that it grows out of the soil, like one of its natural products, like a tree that sinks its roots deep in the interior of the soil and forms a union with it.



8

It is this that gives us our understanding of home (Heimat), of a bond with blood and earth (Erden). For one kind of men [this is] the condition of their life and the meaning of their existence."



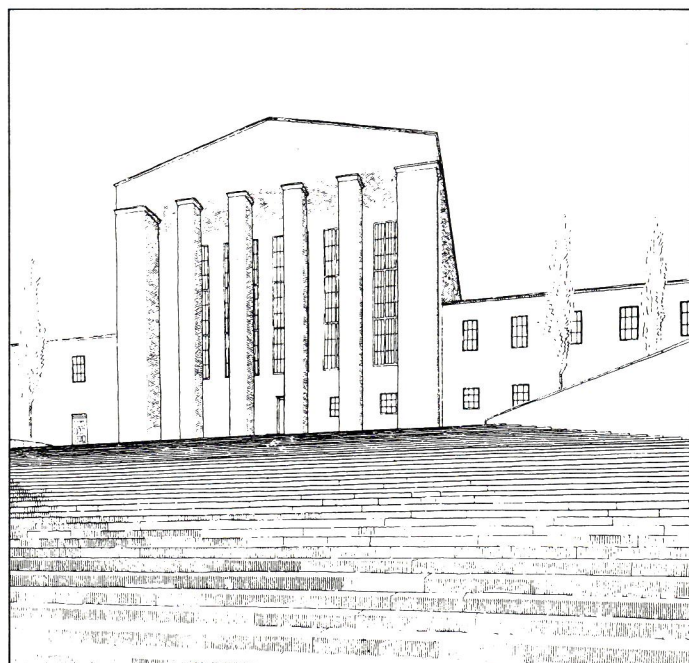
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9 *Neue Wache, Unter den Linden, Berlin. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1817–1818.*

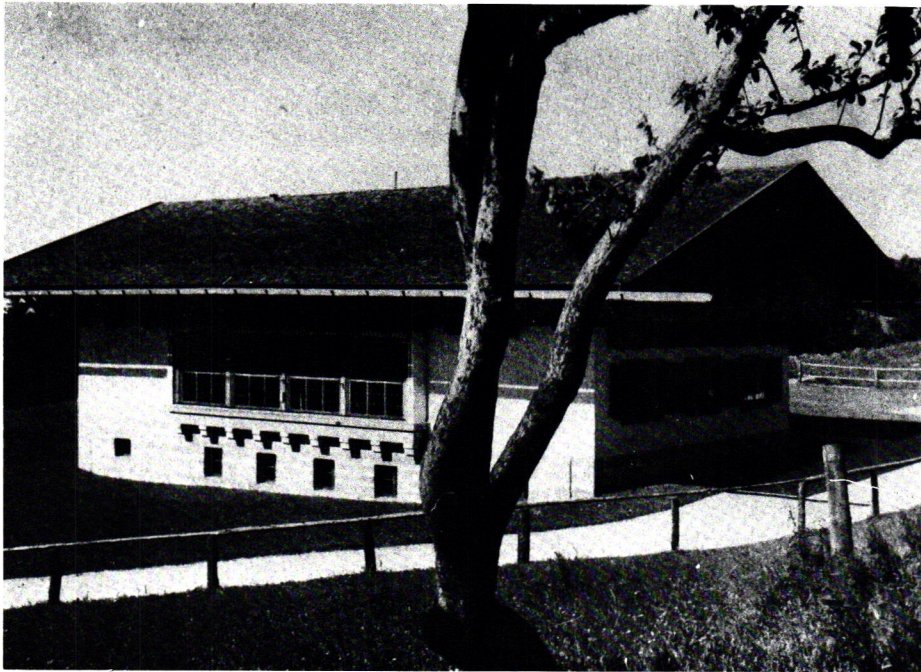
10 *Institution for Rhythmical Gymnastics, Hellerau. Heinrich Tessenow, 1910. View of main building.*

11 *Architect's own atelier, Obersalzberg. Albert Speer, 1934.*

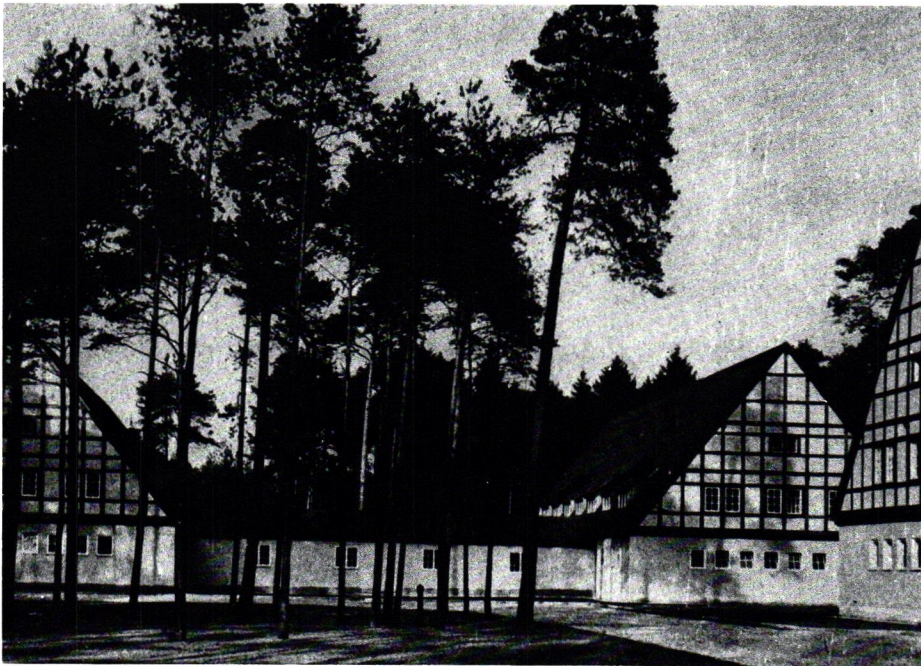
12 *Arbeiter-Unterkünfte, Nuremberg, Albert Speer.*



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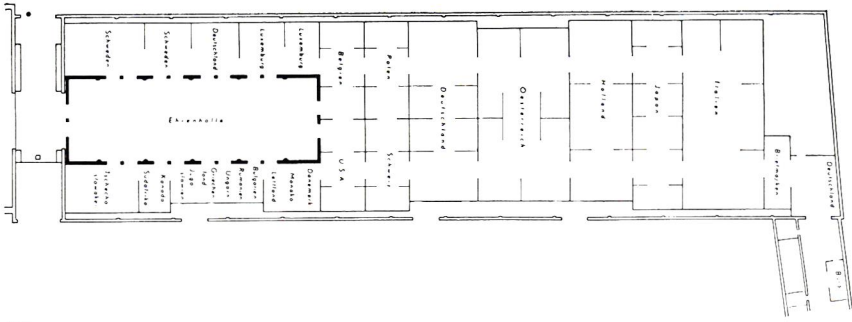


12

Ideology: Style and Status

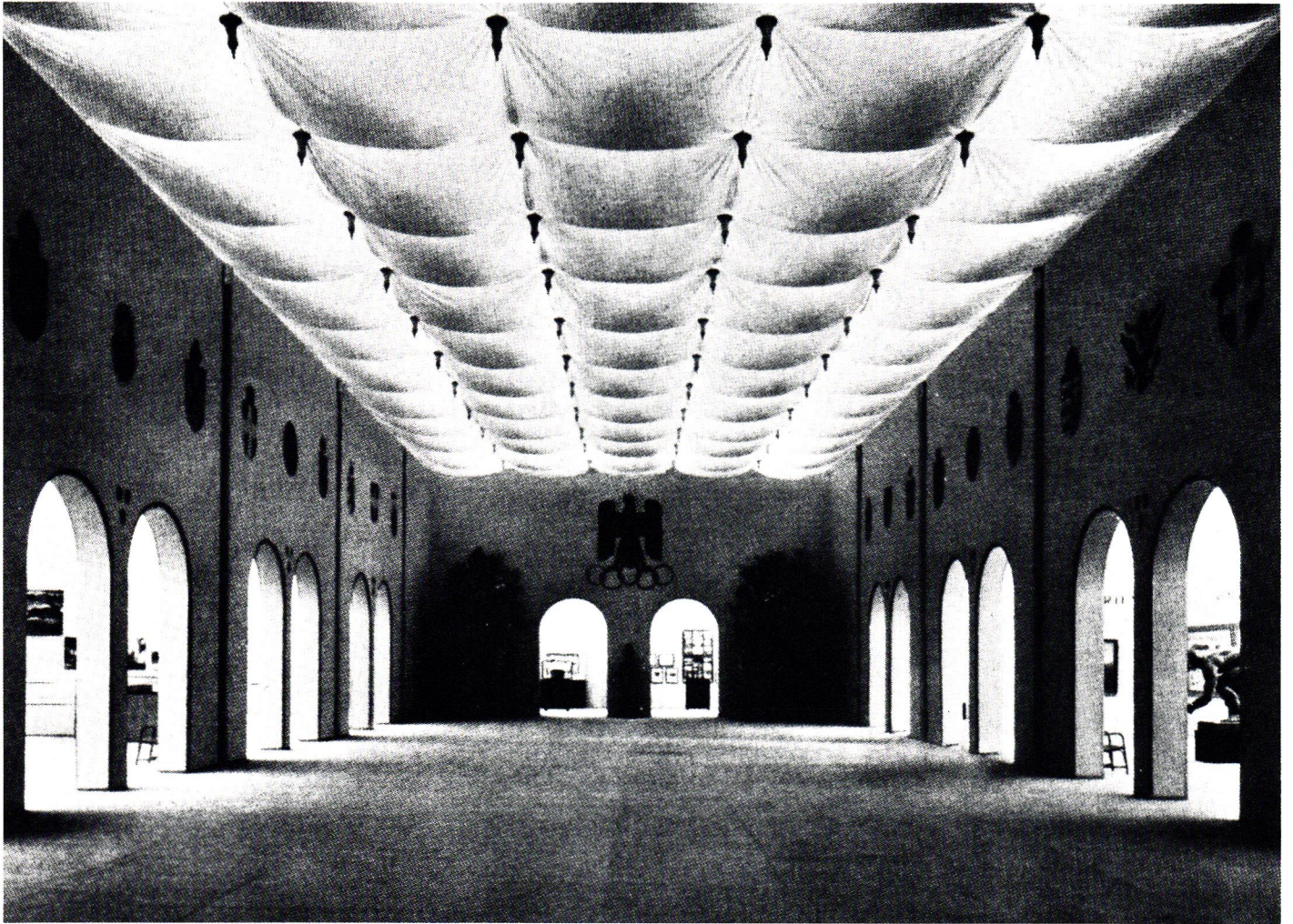
The “battle of styles” of the nineteenth century as extended into the twentieth reflected a certain confusion as to the status of built form and a latent anxiety as to whether given work should be classified as architecture or building. Clearly as far as the former was concerned the romantic-classical style was generally deemed appropriate, and this before all else accounts for the extended influence of Schinkel in Germany throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The attempt to develop a reduced, pseudo-classical, yet historical style for all buildings of a monumental nature colors the whole of Tessenow’s work and is as present in his Dalcroze school, Hellerau, of 1910 as it is in his competition design for KdF seaside resort, Rügen, of 1936 (see figs. 18–21). Speer too distinguished between architecture and building, reserving classicism for the former and Heimatstil for the latter. His homely manner is shown in his workers’ housing for Nuremberg and in his own studio in Obersalzberg.

57

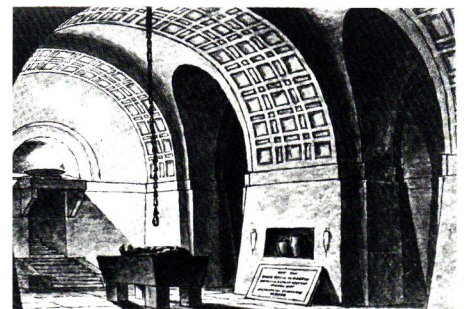


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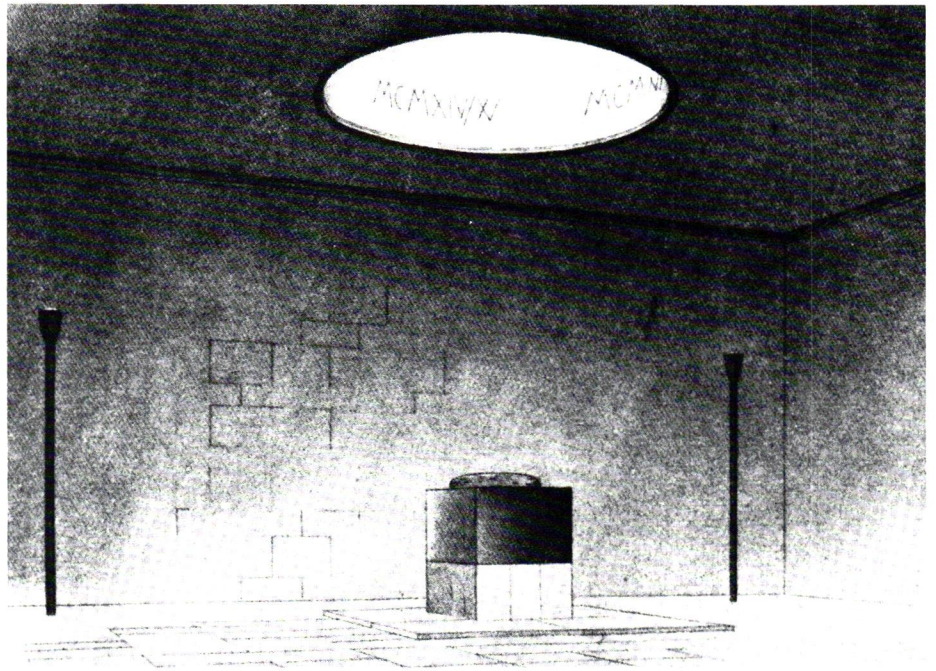
**Romantic Classicism Revisited
1795–1930**

The degree to which the romantic classicism of Schinkel and Friedrich Gilly extended itself into the twentieth century can hardly be overestimated. The formal order and the mood evoked in Gilly's design for a catacomb (complete with Spartan figure lying in state) re-emerge in reduced form in Tessenow's prize-winning entry of 1930 for the re-design of the interior of Schinkel's *Neue Wache* as a war memorial. The same can be said, although to a lesser degree, about Mies van der Rohe's design for the same competition. It is interesting to note that Tessenow's foyer for the Olympic Art Exhibition of 1936 lies outside of this tradition. Its neo-Biedermeier mood seems closer to the decor of Robert Ley's *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) or KdF movement. The general ambience suggests that the gratification of the libido is inseparable from the triumph of the State, a task for which the nostalgic solemnity of romantic classicism would have been unsuitable.

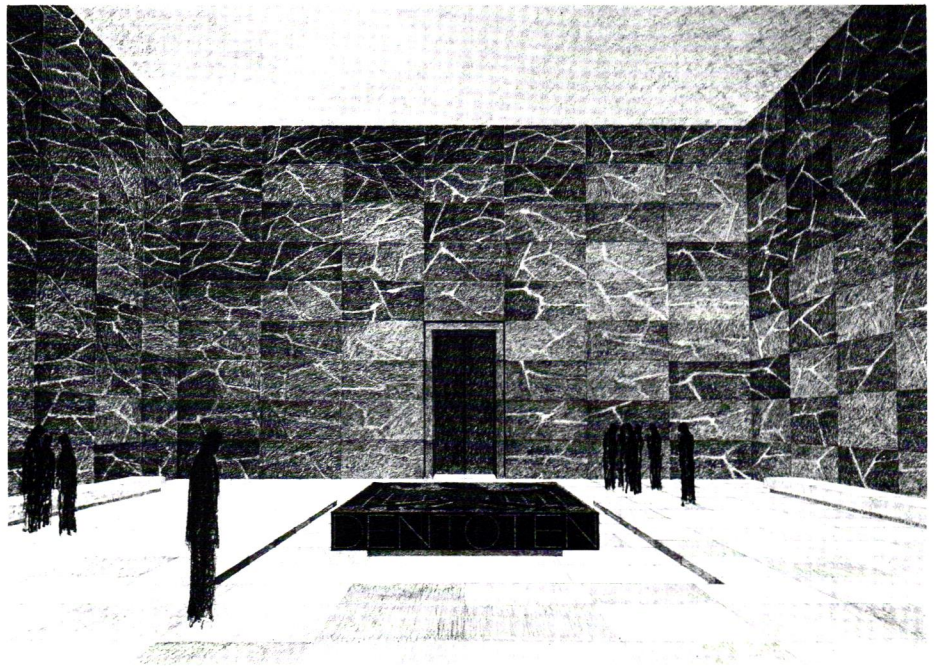
13, 14 Olympic Art Exhibition, Berlin. Heinrich Tessenow, 1936. Plan and general view of entrance hall.

15 Design for a catacomb. Friedrich Gilly, c. 1798.

16, 17 *Neue Wache* Competition, Berlin, 1930. Tessenow (16) and Mies van der Rohe (17).



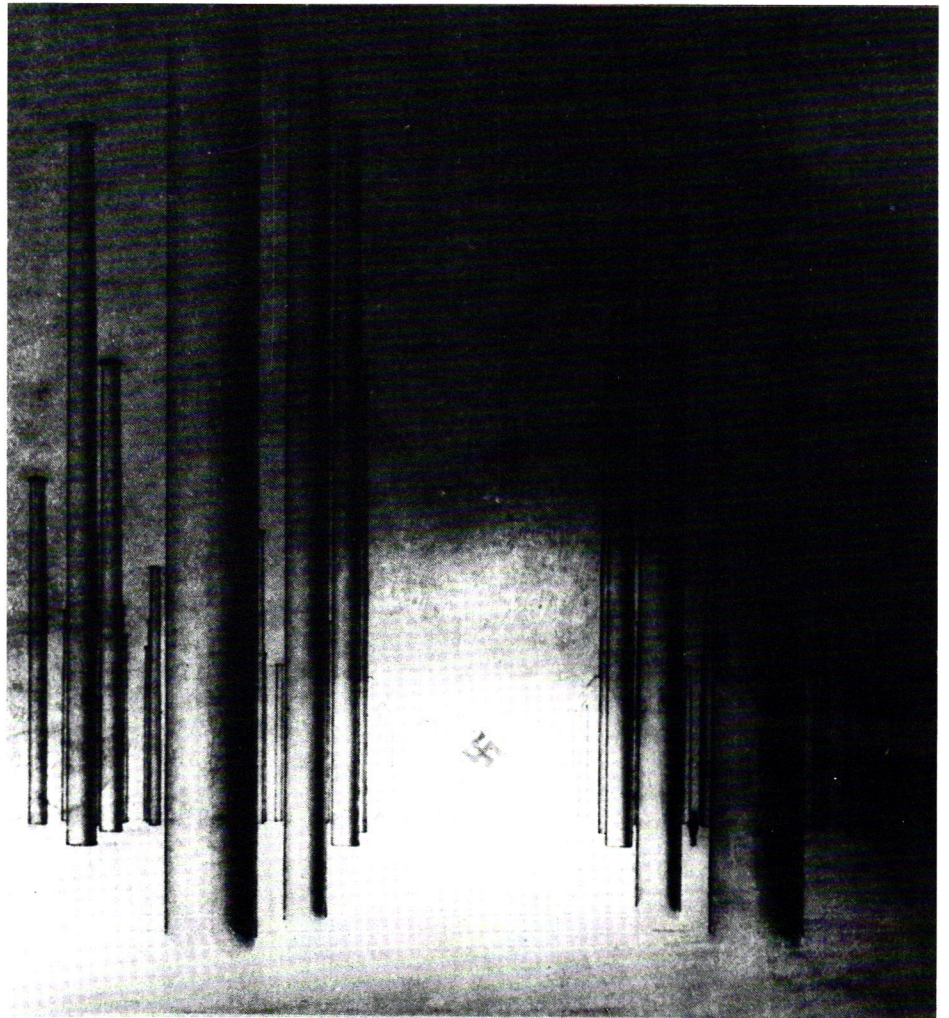
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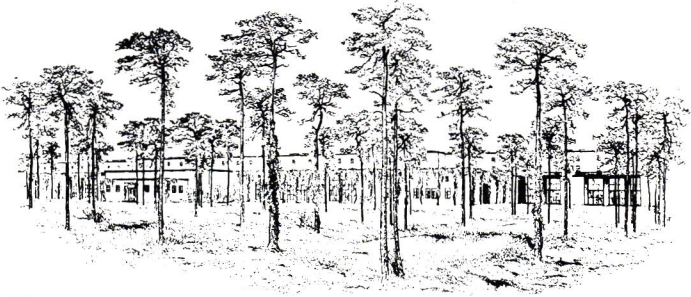


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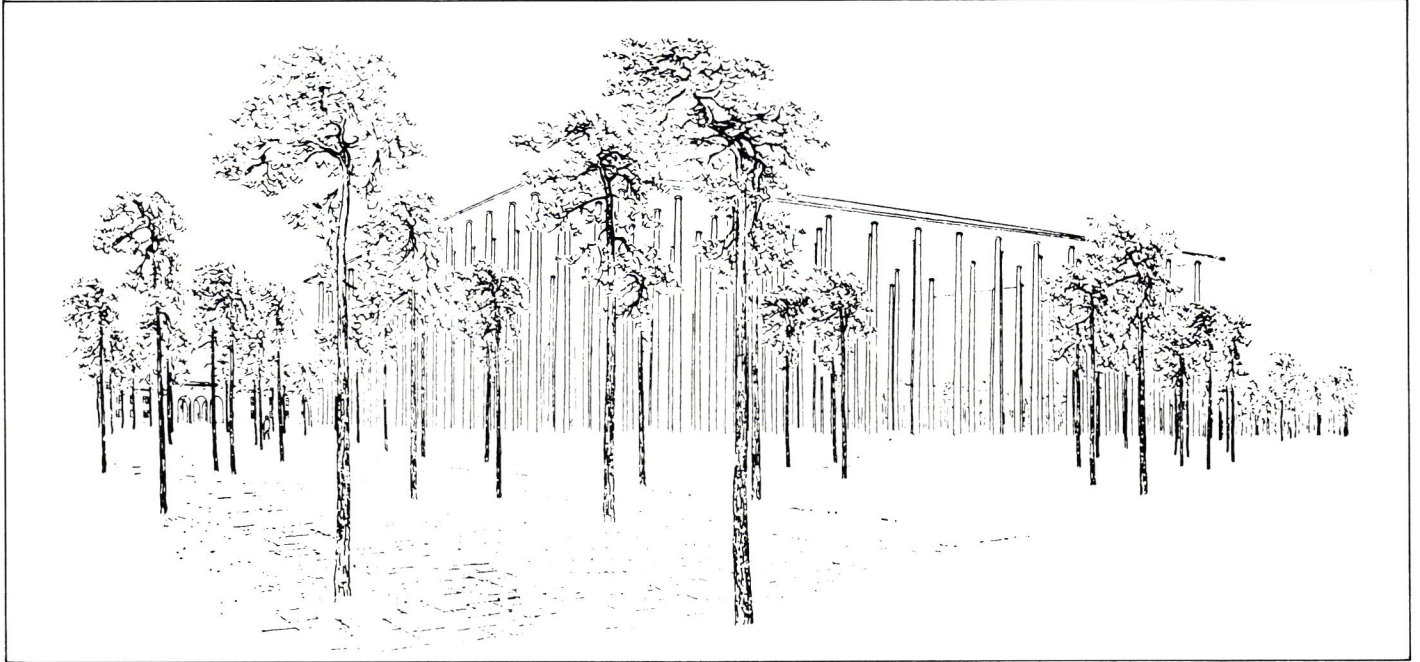
60 **KdF Seaside Resort, Rügen, 1936**

This little known project by Tessenow shows the extent to which he had placed himself in the service of the Third Reich by 1936. Yet, even in a banqueting hall for a popular seaside resort, he refuses to indulge in any of the rococo trivialities so beloved by the ideologues of Ley's Kraft durch Freude movement. (See the KdF pleasure ship interiors that were actually produced during the period.) Instead he evokes the mood of a solemn, earth worshiping culture, presenting the banqueting hall (Festhalle) as a rational, political-cum-religious shrine rather than a place for eating and celebration. The image of a forest/temple, wherein the peristyle of the shrine appears to merge imperceptibly into the pine stands of the dune forest, may have been derived from Max Berg's Jahrhundertshalle built in Breslau in 1912.



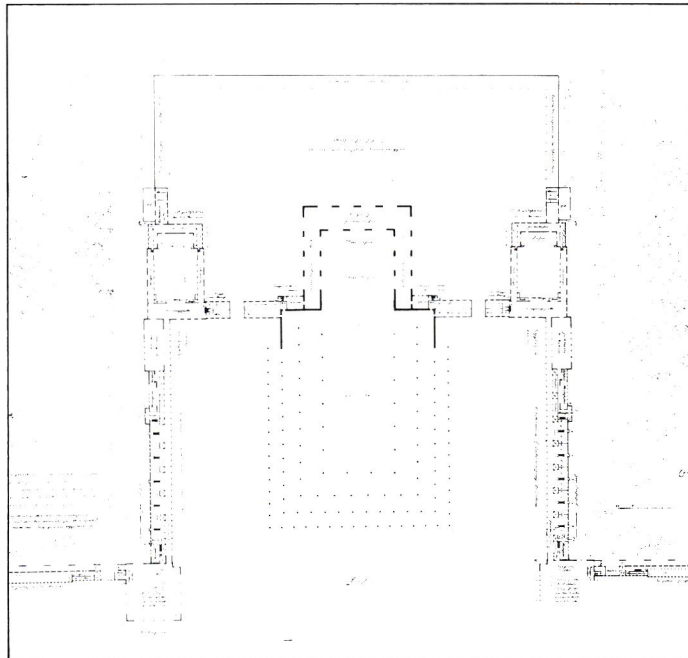


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18, 20 KdF Seaside Resort, Rügen.
Heinrich Tessenow, 1936. Interior
and exterior peristyle of banqueting
hall.

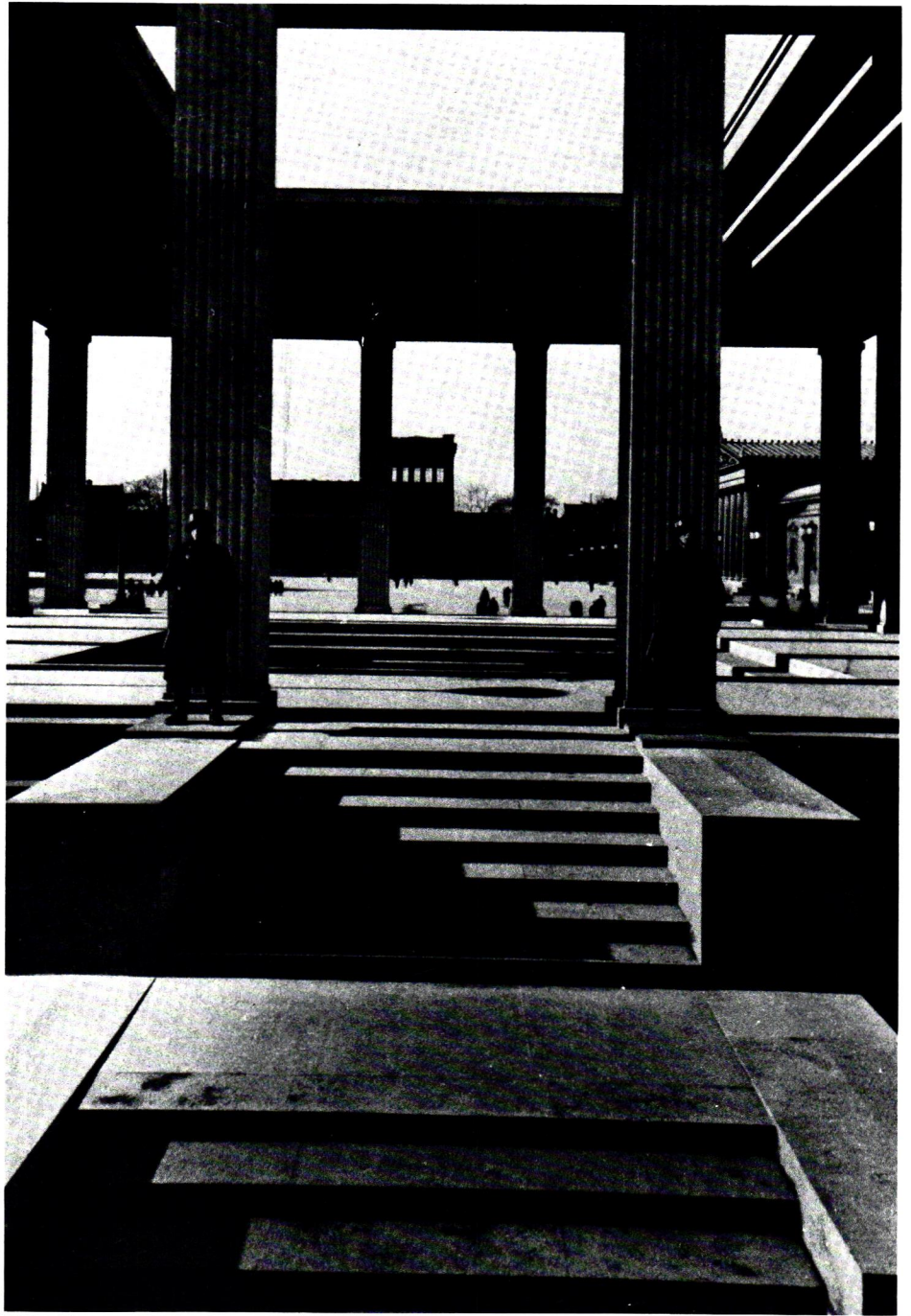
19, 21 KdF Seaside Resort, Rügen.
Heinrich Tessenow, 1936.

Perspective of typical residential
building and plan of banqueting
hall with peristyle and ancillary
buildings.

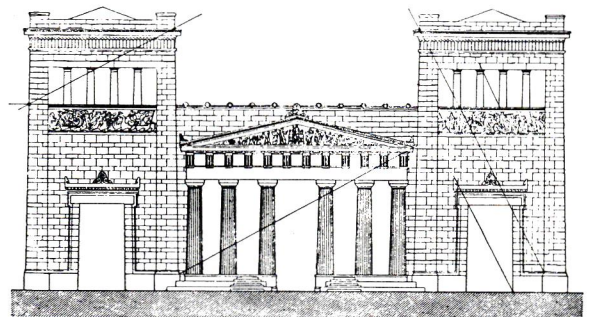
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62 ***Cinematic Martyrdom, Munich, 1934***

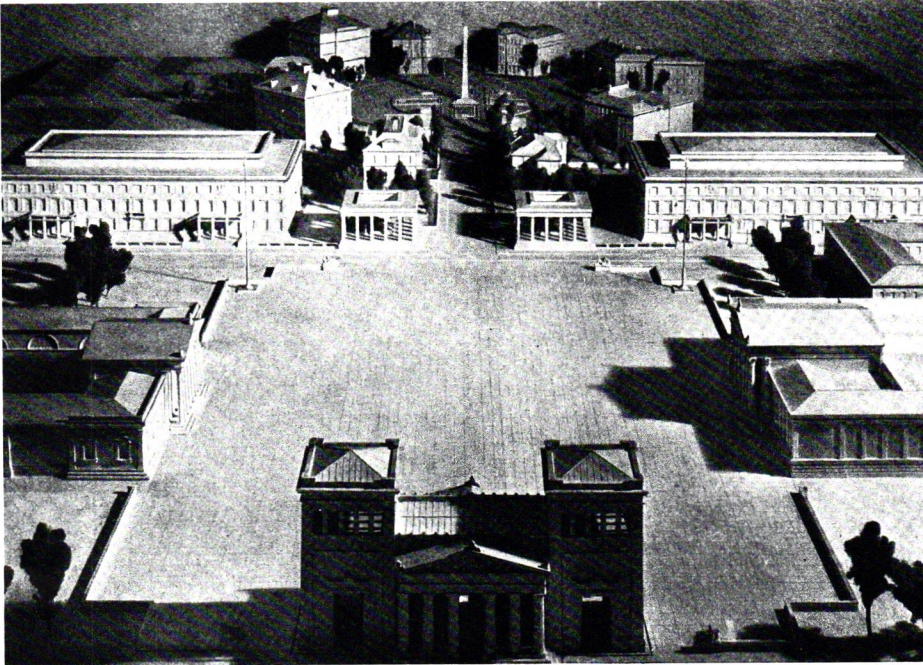
These temples were built on the Königslichen Platz in Munich, opposite von Klenze's Propylea, to the designs of Paul Ludwig Troost, Hitler's personal architect. Erected as the last resting place of the so-called Nazi martyrs killed in the Munich "beer hall" putsch of 1923, these temples constituted the setting for the propaganda film Für Uns (For Us) made in 1937, which recorded their mystical dedication at the end of an elaborate Nazi memorial parade through the streets of Munich. Led by Hitler, the cortege of bare-headed party members filed through an avenue of plywood pylons, each member carrying a brazier and bearing the name of one of the "martyrs." The whole grotesque proceeding culminated in a roll call for the dead in the Königslichen Platz in which the crowd responded with a ghostly "here" as each name was called.



22



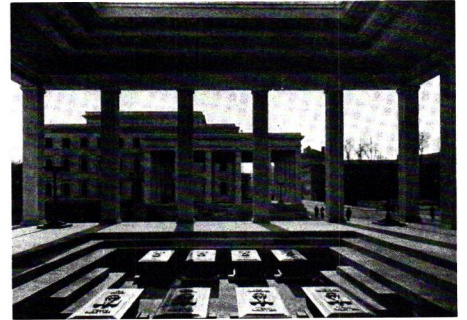
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22, 26 Honor temples, Königslichen Platz, Munich. Paul Ludwig Troost, 1934.

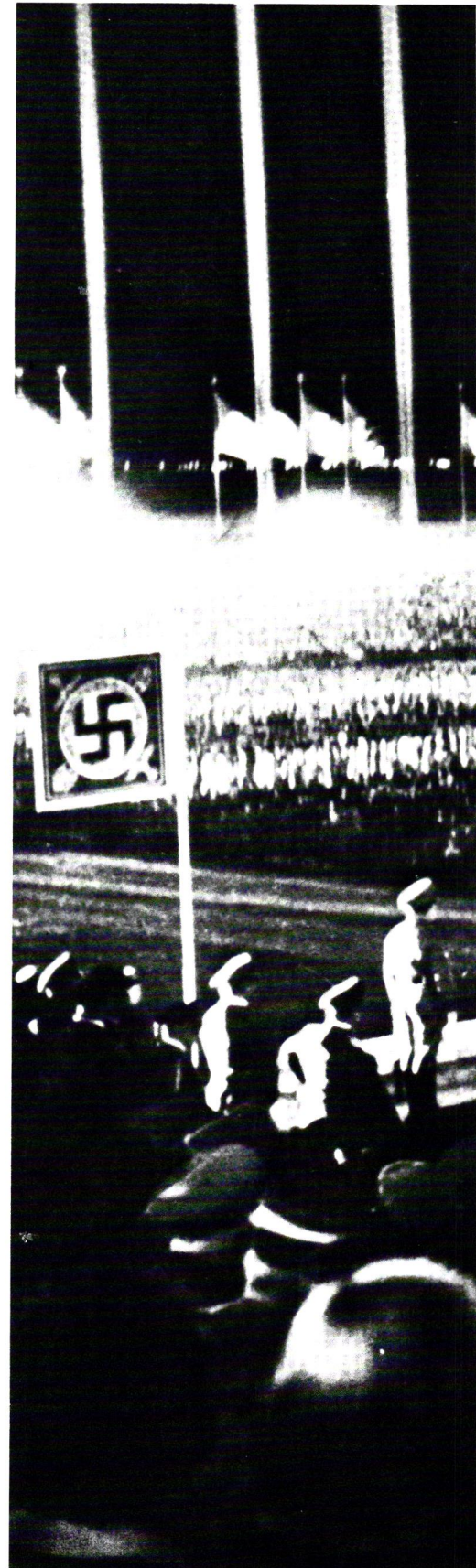
23 Propylea, Königslichen Platz, Munich. 1850.

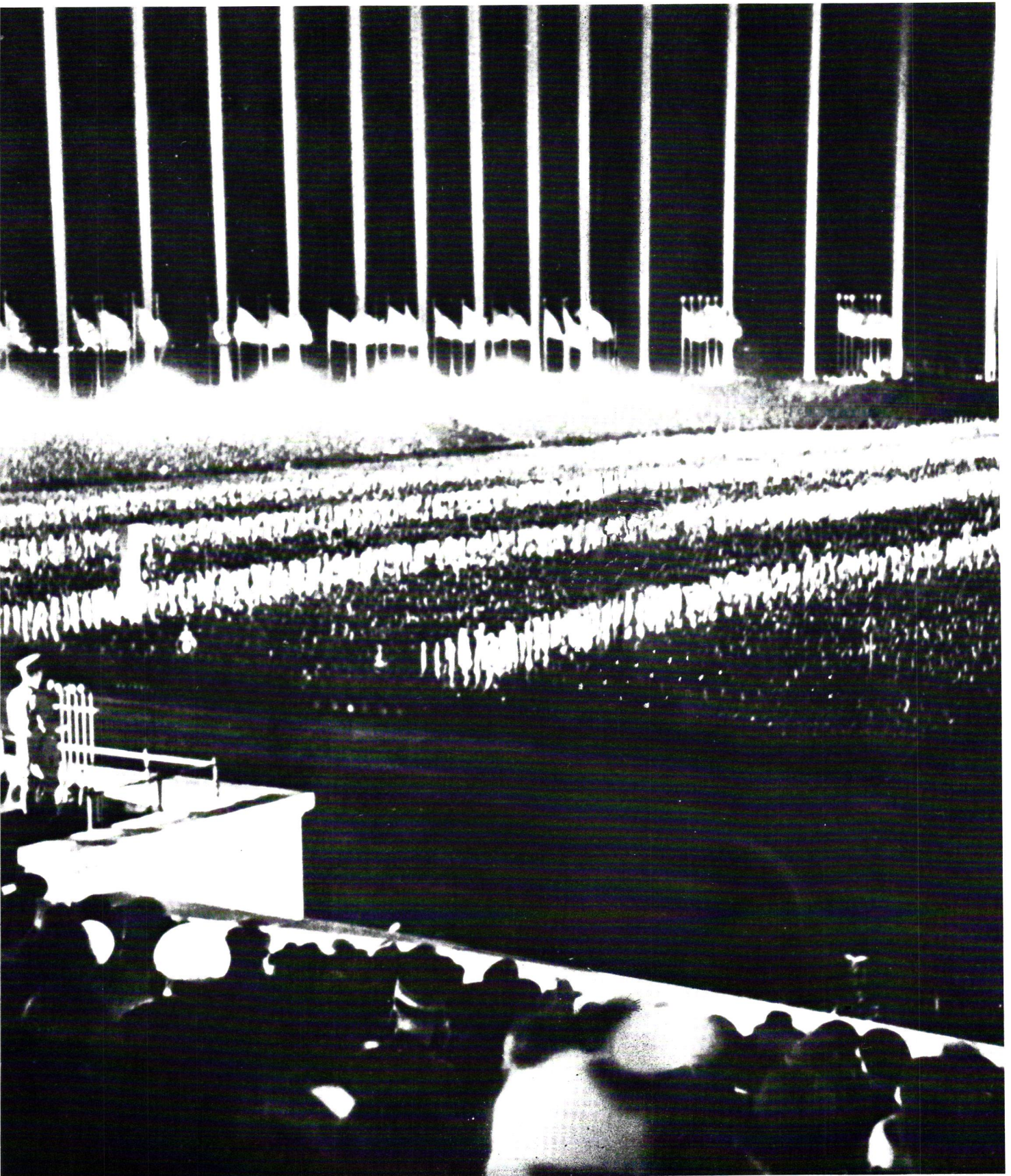
24 Königslichen Platz, Munich. Model showing the relation of Troost's works to the original square and to von Klenze's Propylea.

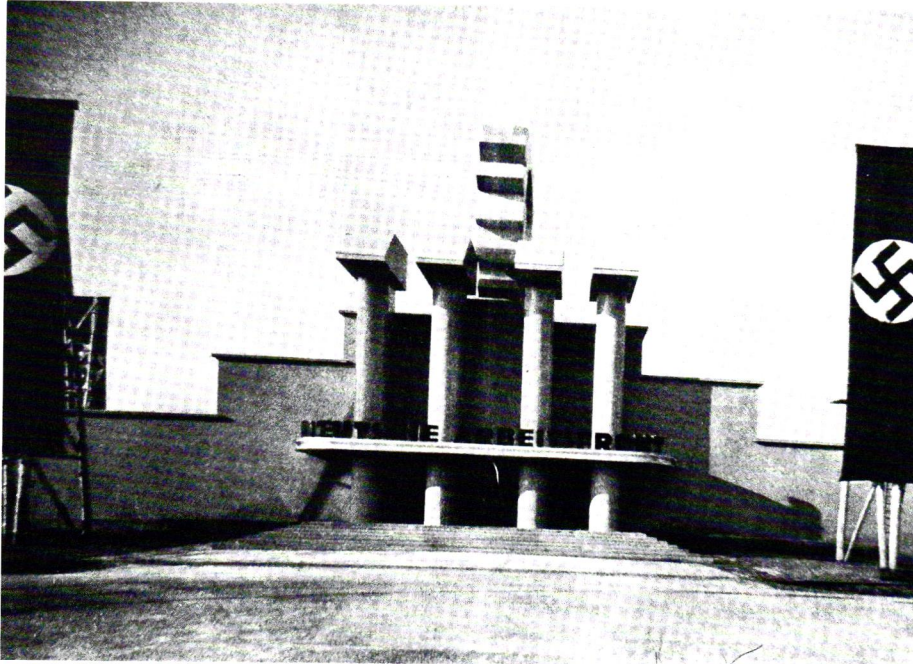
25 Honor Temples with the Nazi Party Headquarters, the so-called Führerbau in the background. Both works were designed in a reduced neoclassical manner by Troost, although the headquarters, completed in 1936, involved the collaboration of Leonhard Gall and Gerdy Troost.

64 ***The Cathedral of Ice, 1936; NSDAP Rally, Nuremberg, 1936***

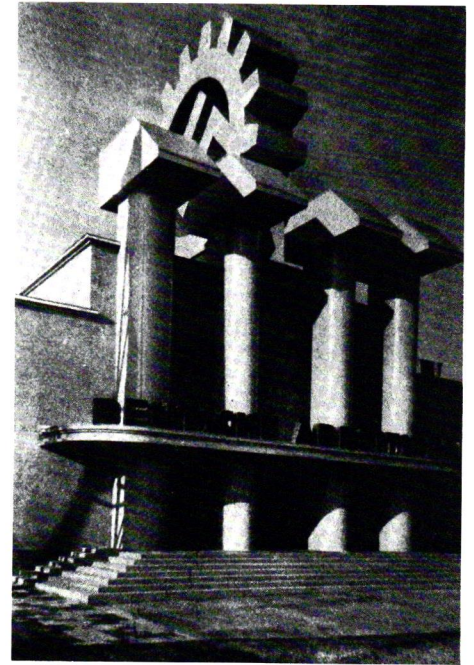
Temporary stands and decor by Albert Speer. This virtual space, created by searchlights, was Speer's foremost light arena, called by Sir Neville Henderson, a "cathedral of ice." It is clear that Speer's approach to the mass pageant was indebted to the French revolutionary festivals. These had been documented by Gilly during his stay in France in 1792.



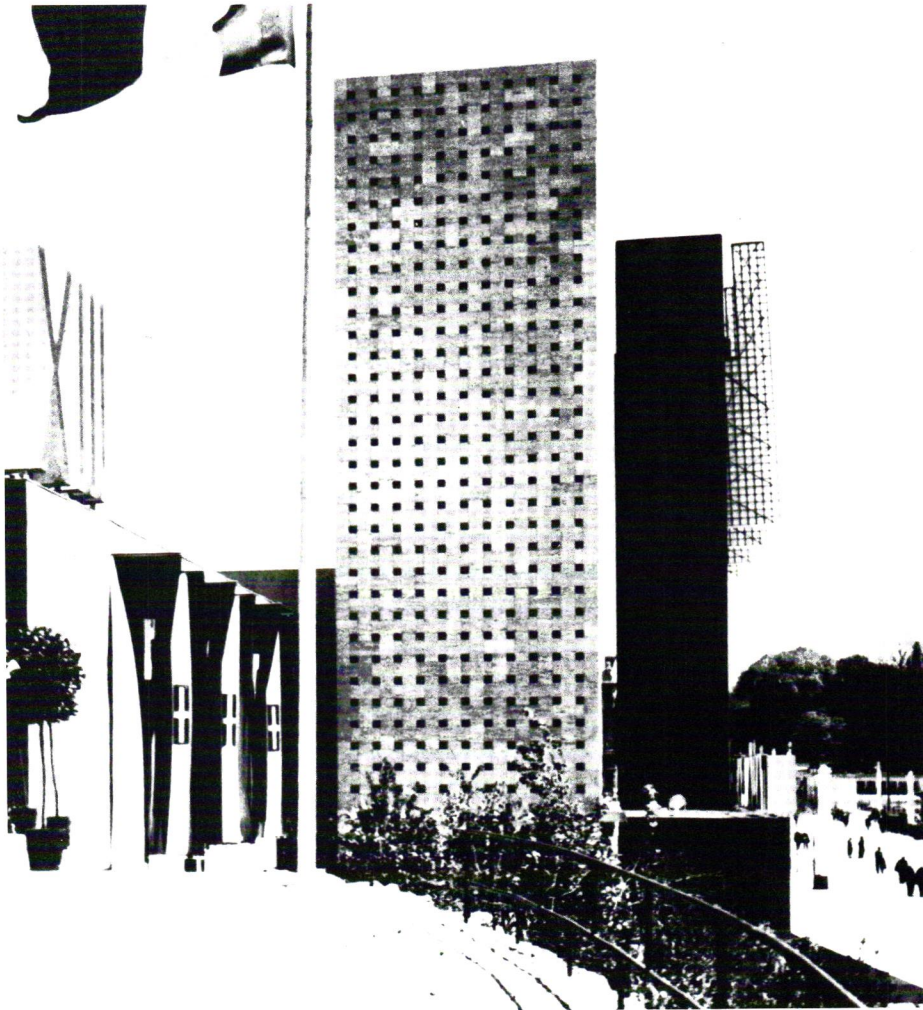




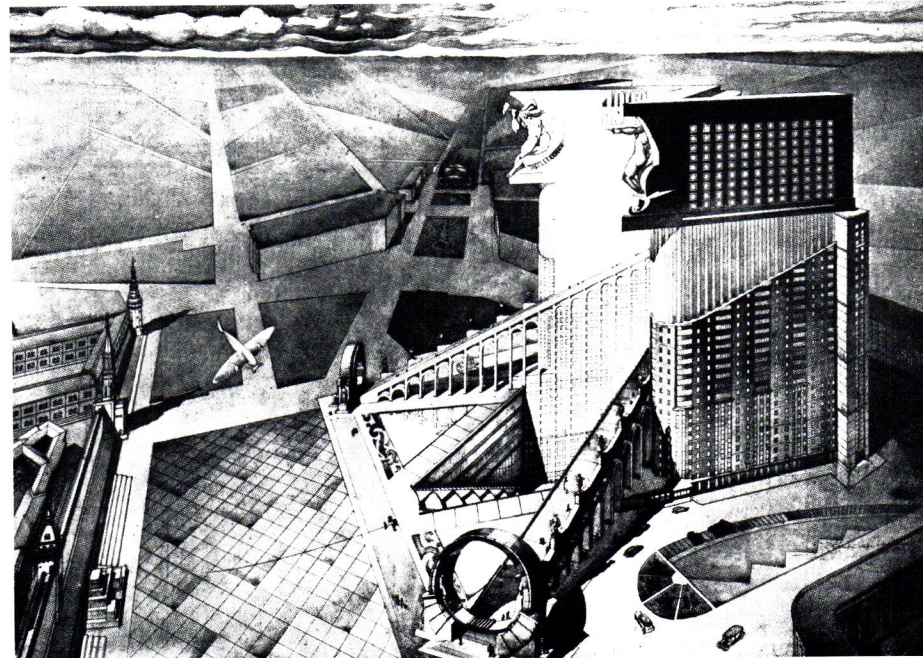
Vicissitudes of Rhetoric, 1932–1935
The architectural rhetoric adopted by different political bodies existing at the same time is too similar to be merely coincidental, as between Benno von Arendt's German Labor Front pavilion designed for Berlin in 1934 and Adalberto Libera's facade for the Italian Fascist Exhibition held in Rome in 1932. The Germans were obviously following Italian and also Russian leads, for a similarity can also be found between von Arendt's work and Konstantin Melnikov's Dom Narkomtjazzprom of 1934–1936. The theme of four pylons (symbolic hammers in the case of the Nazis—no doubt in order to capitalize on the famous Bolshevik symbol and the Italian symbol of the fasces)



reappeared in Libera's Fascist pavilion for the Brussels exhibition of 1935. With this last, however, one is immediately reminded of Leonidov's 1933 project for the Dom Narkomtjazzprom, and at this juncture one begins to question who has influenced who. In any event it is clear that in each case, the advent of the millenium demanded the invention of symbolic codes which were more or less arbitrary—a kind of instant culture.



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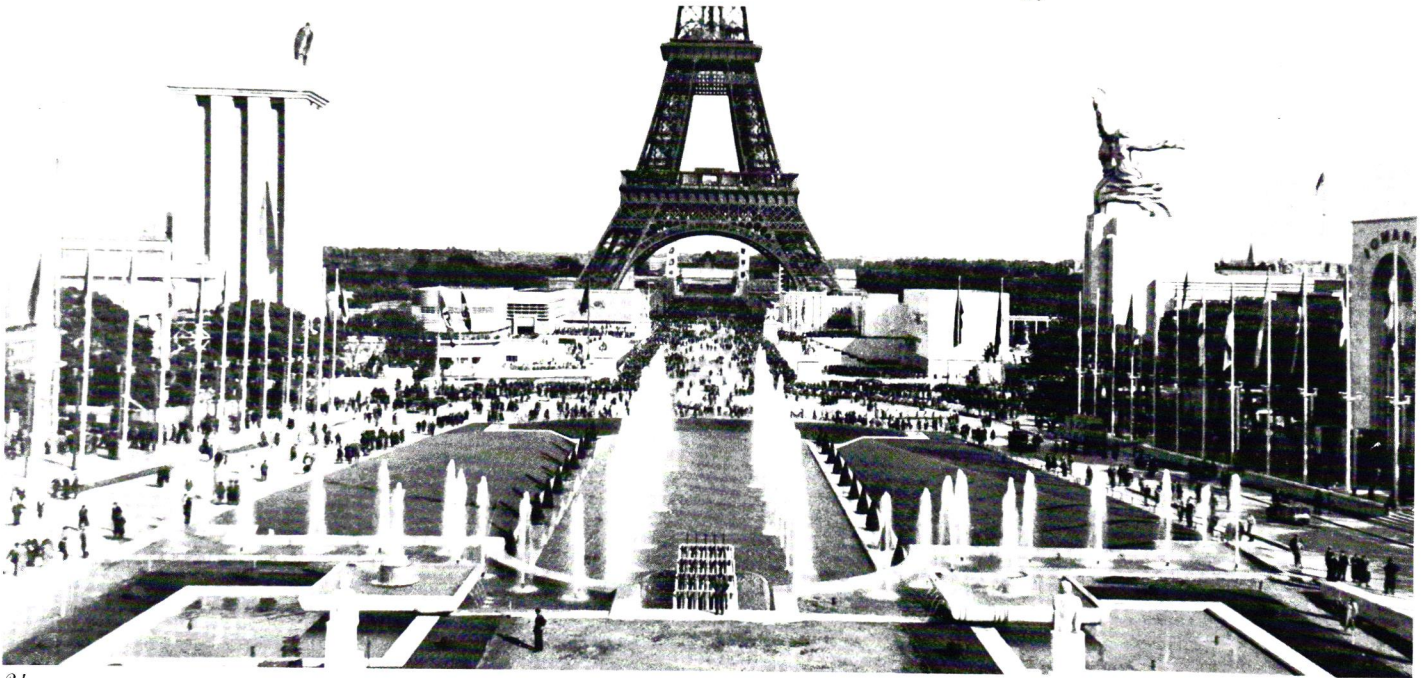
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28, 29 German Labor Front Pavilion in the exhibition "German People—German Work," Berlin. Benno von Arendt, 1934.

30 Italian Pavilion, Brussels Exhibition. A. Libera and M. de Renzi, 1935.

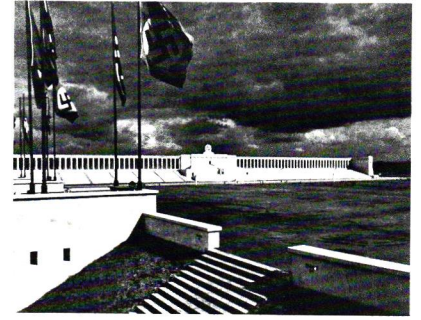
31 Dom Narkomtjazzprom project. Konstantin Melnikov, 1934–36.

32 Italian Fascist Exhibition, Rome. A. Libera, 1932.



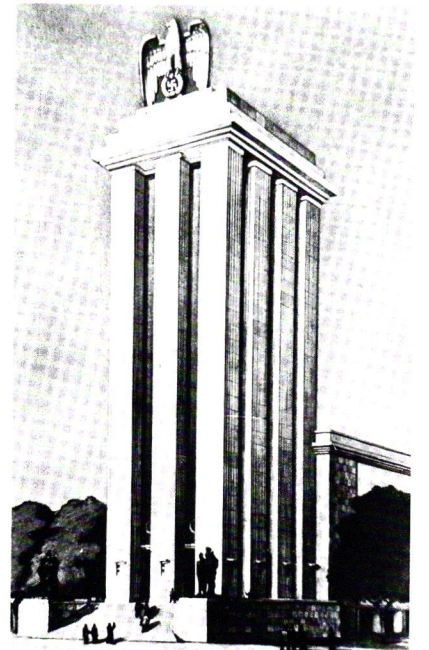
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33 Stadium, Zeppelinfeld, Nuremberg. Albert Speer, 1937.
 34 World Exhibition, Paris, 1937. The Third Reich Pavilion by Albert Speer (left), the Soviet Union Pavilion by M. Yofan and V. Mukhina (right).

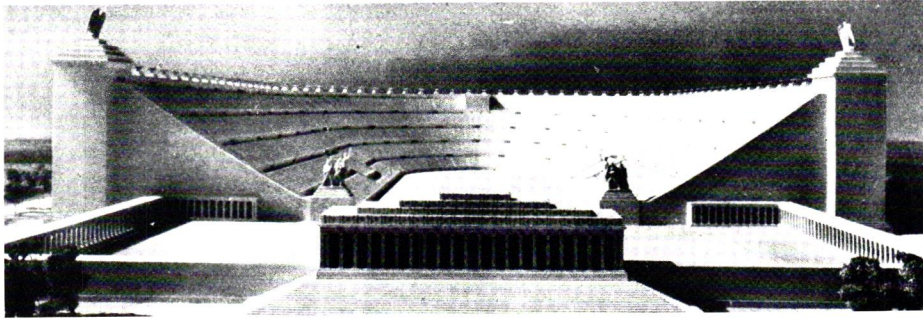


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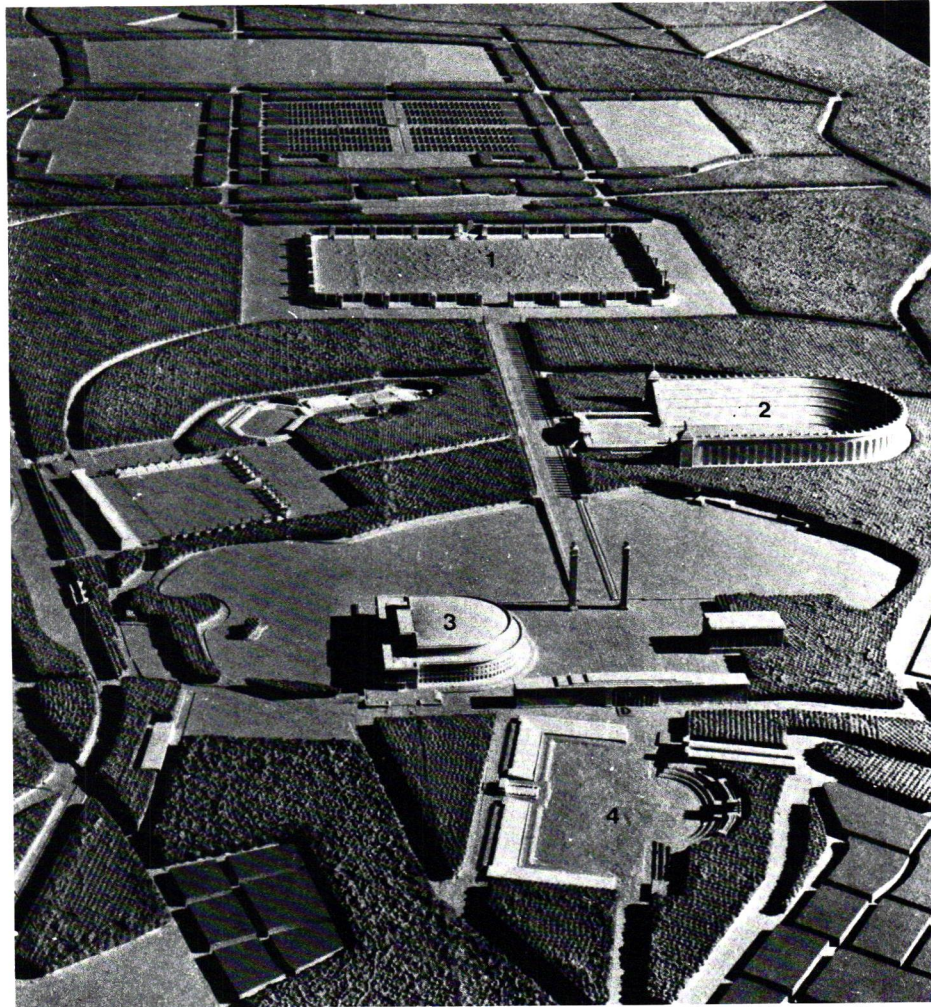
35 Third Reich Pavilion, World Exhibition, Paris. Albert Speer, 1937. Perspective drawing.
 36 Model of the German Stadium in the Reichsparteitagsgelände, Nuremberg. Albert Speer, 1937. Seating capacity: 405,000 people.



35



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37 Model of the Reichsparteitagsgelände, Zeppelinfeld, Nuremberg. A. Speer, 1937. Elements of the site: 1, the Marchfield; 2, the German Stadium; 3, the Congress Building by Ludwig Ruff; 4, the Zeppelinfeld Stadium.

World Triumph. Paris and Nuremberg, 1937

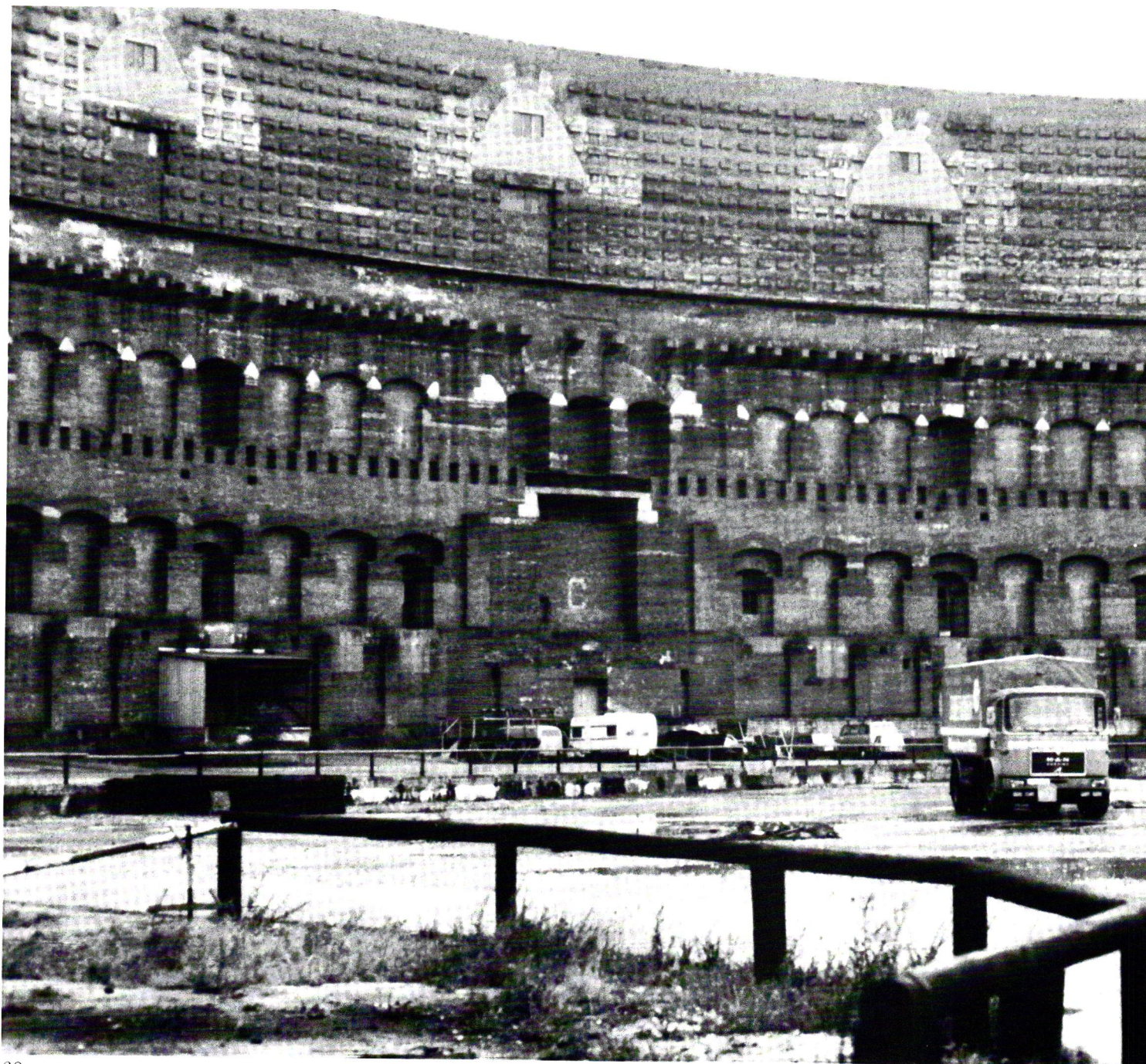
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The symbolic confrontation between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union was prophetically enacted at the Paris World Exhibition of 1937 when the two pavilions faced each other across the grand axis extending between the Trocadero and the Eiffel Tower. The Soviet Union, for all its Social Realist commitment to classical forms after 1932, still wished to assert the progressive dynamism of its society. This accounts for the swept back, all but streamlined profiles of its stepped classical cornices. Nothing could have contrasted more strongly with this than Speer's neoclassical four-square pavilion which, aside from the vertical thrust of the three by four pillared entry pylon, was totally static. The reduced form of Speer's delicately fluted square "pilasters" seems to have been taken from Troost's Honor Temples in Munich. Paris was a triumph for Speer in as much as his design for the Nazi Party rally site in Nuremberg—his Reichsparteitagsgelände—was honored with an award.

*38 Congress Hall, Nuremberg.
Ludwig Ruff and Franz Ruff, 1943.
Present state, 1977.*

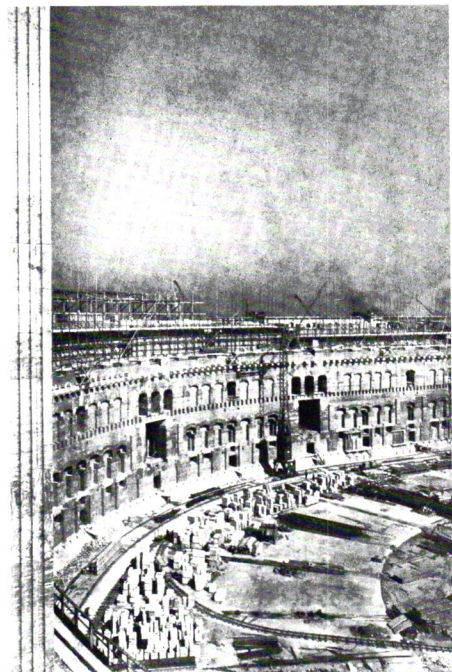
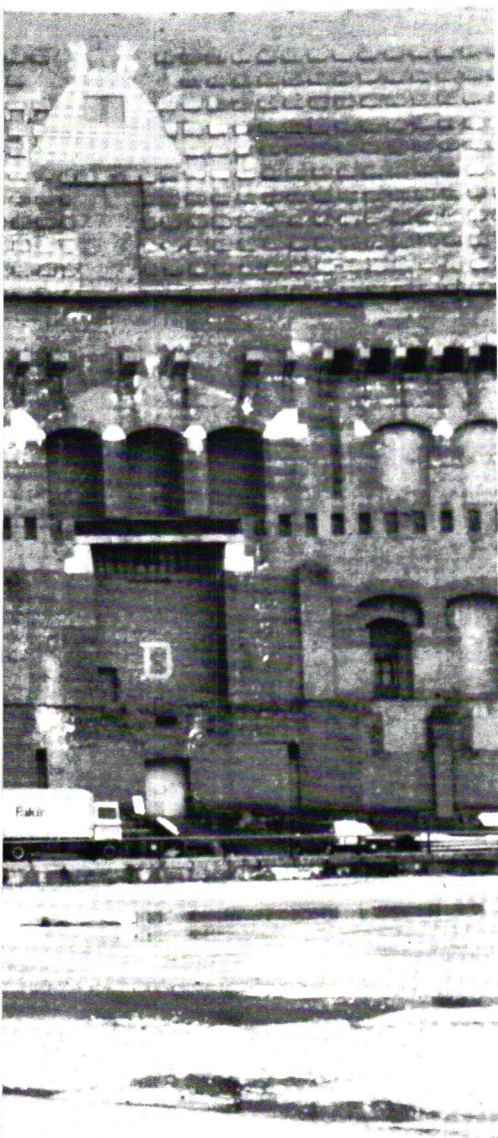
*39 Congress Hall, Nuremberg.
Under construction, 1942.*

*40 Speer inspecting the works at
Nuremberg with technicians and
city officials.*



The Law of the Ruins, 1937

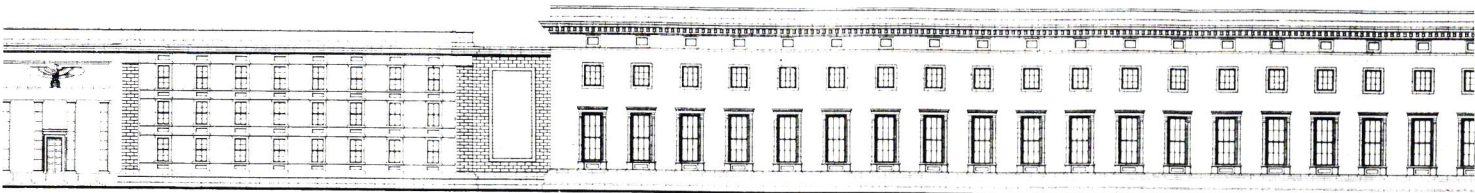
It is one of the ironies of Nazi architecture that it should conceive of the State in such terms as to anticipate its own eclipse, as, for instance, Speer's so-called "law of the ruins." Goebbel's pioneering of mass media (radio and film) for the purposes of modern propaganda was patently at variance with the narcissistic values of a state which would choose to exclude modern technology from its monuments in order that they should deteriorate in a picturesque way. Speer's insistence that all metal reinforcement should be eliminated from the fabric of the Party monuments then being erected in Nuremberg led to constructional methods of Roman venerability. Not only did Speer himself practice what he preached, but the force of his "law of the ruins" was never more evident than in Ruff's Congress Hall which by 1942 was still incomplete. Were the contradictions of Nazi architecture ever more eloquently rendered than by this Trajan-like masonry being laid in place by tower cranes?



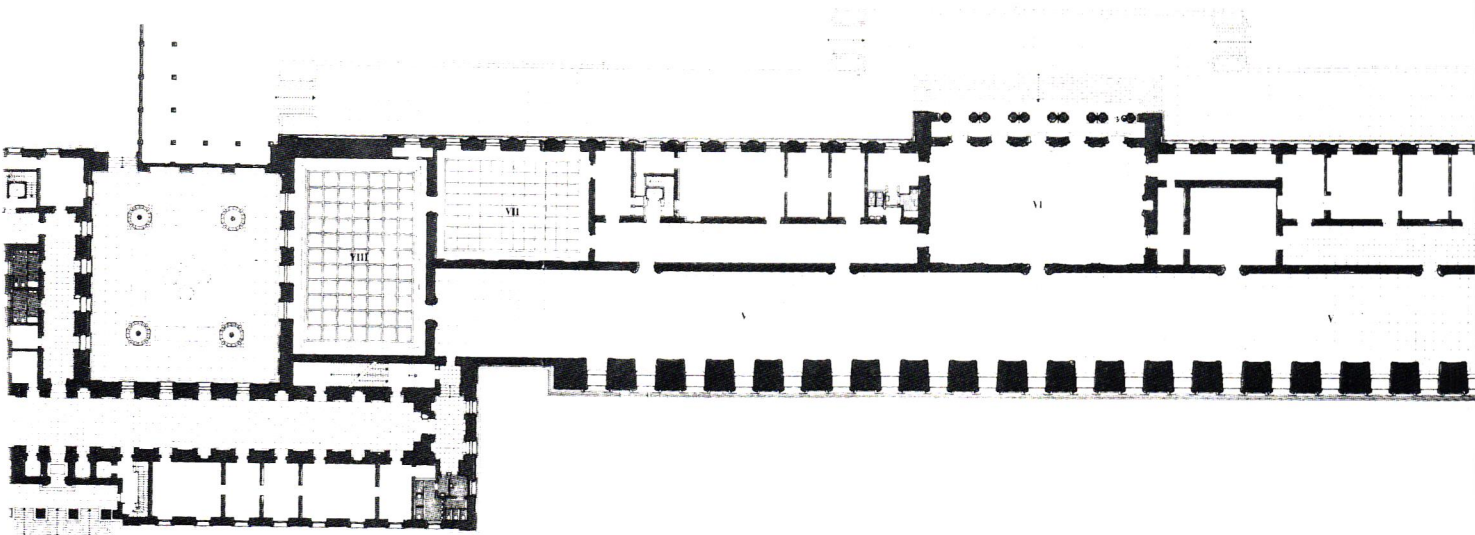
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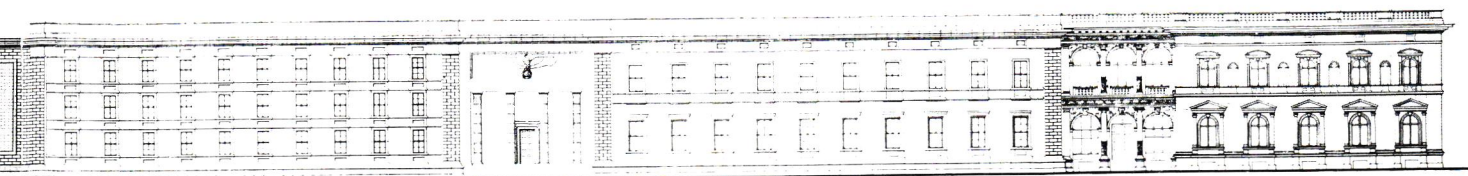
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41, 42 New State Chancellery,
Berlin. Albert Speer, 1937. South
elevation to Voss-strasse and plan of
ground floor.

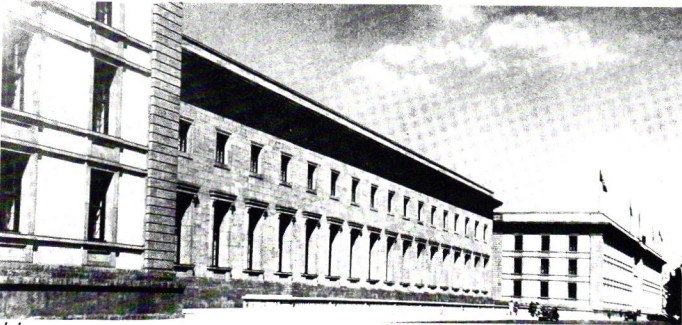
- I Honor Courtyard
- II Vestibule
- III Mosaic Room
- IV Round Hall
- V Marble Gallery
- VI Führer's Study
- VII Reich Cabinet Conference Room
- VIII Main Reception Room
- IX Dining Room
- X Entrance from Voss-strasse



The skill and architectural culture with which this structure is planned and proportioned is beyond dispute, particularly when one considers the sequential disposition of the inner space, that is, the architectural promenade which a visitor would have to traverse before having an audience with the Führer.



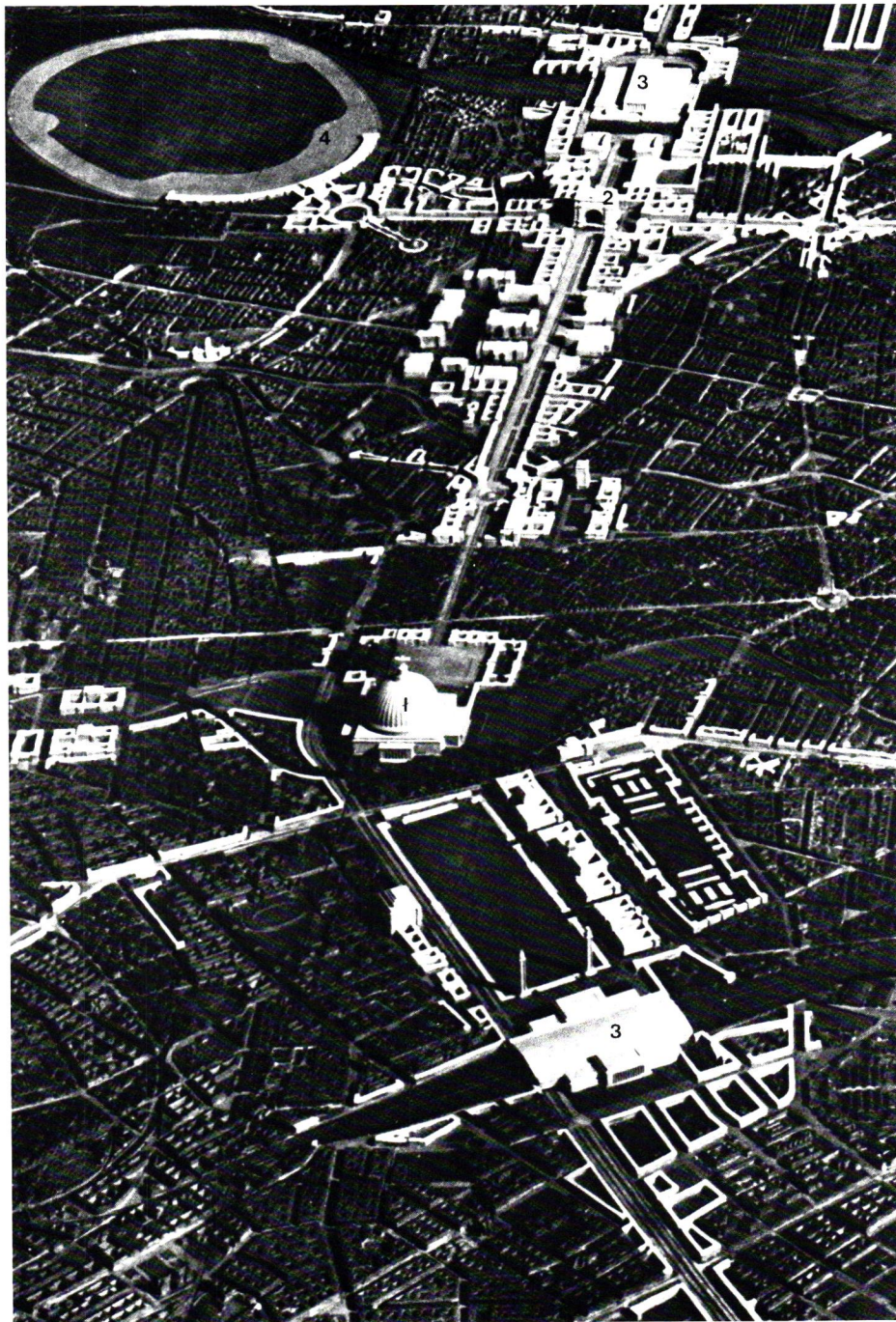
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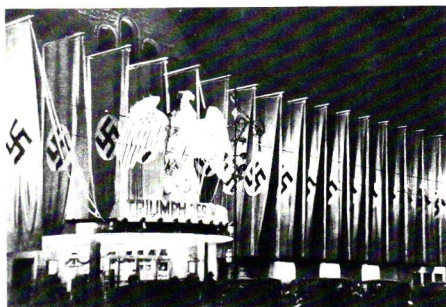
The Triumph of Illusion

75

On the 30th of January, 1937, Albert Speer was named the Inspector General for the re-design of the German capital. From this point on he worked in close consultation with Hitler on the plan of this megalomaniac enterprise. From a logistical point of view, the plan provided for the elimination of the numerous railway termini that surrounded Berlin and for the exploitation and augmentation of the line encircling the city. Two major termini would then be located to the north and south of the city, linked by an axis route which was interrupted two-thirds along its length by a vast domed hall.

46 The New Berlin Plan. Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer, 1939. Central section: 1, Great Hall; 2, Hitler's Arch; 3, Railway termini; 4, Tempelhof airport.

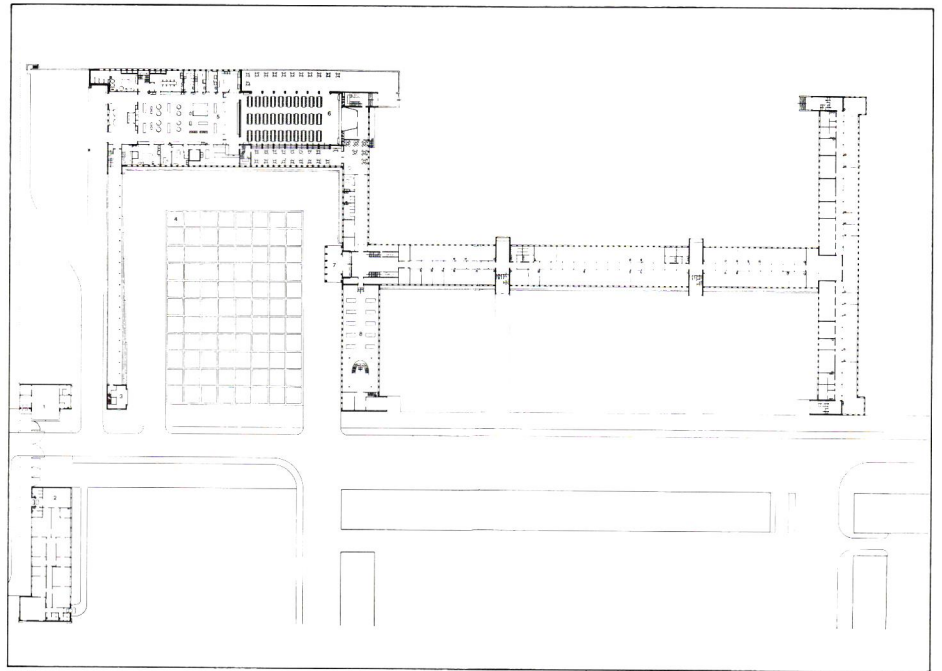
47 Decor of the UFA Palace, Berlin, for the premier of Leni Riefensthal's film *The Triumph of the Will*. Albert Speer, 1935.



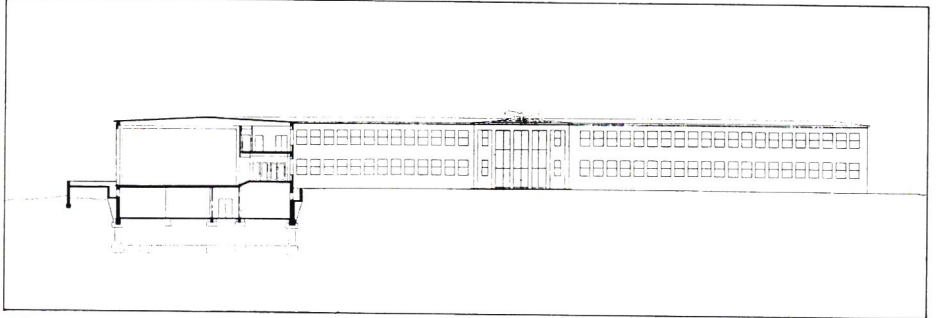
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43-45 New State Chancellery, Berlin. Albert Speer, 1937. Honor Courtyard, view from the Voss-strasse, and the interior of the marble gallery.

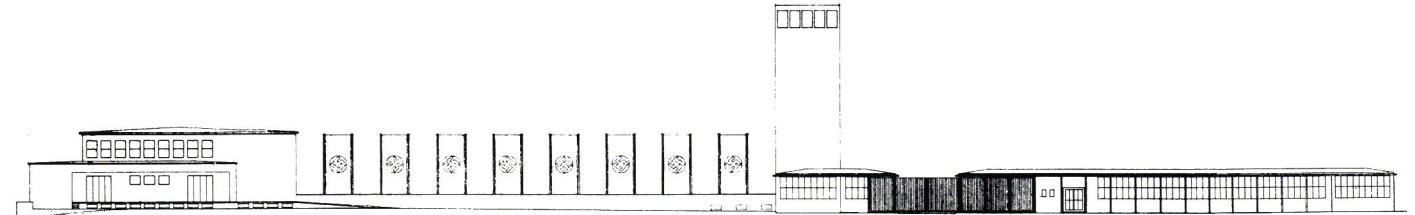
- 76 48, 49 Heinkel Factory, Oranienburg. H. Rimpl, 1936. Ground plan and elevational section: 1, control gate; 2, reception; 3, watch tower; 4, honor court; 5, kitchen; 6, dining hall; 7, administration block; 8, museum.
- 50 Heinkel Factory, Oranienburg, north elevation. Note the provision for the affixing of Nazi banners to the standards of the honor court.
- 51 The honor court and administration building. Note the simulation in brick piers of romantic-classical profiles and rhythms in the entry portico. Elsewhere the building maintains a more conventional texture, namely, pierced fenestration in load-bearing brickwork.
- 52 Apprentices exercising before the assembly sheds. The official caption read: "The young apprentices are the future workers. Their physical and spiritual upbringing has been taken over by the firm itself."
- 53 Mines and Metals Research Building, I.I.T., Chicago. Mies van der Rohe with Holabird and Root, 1942-1943.



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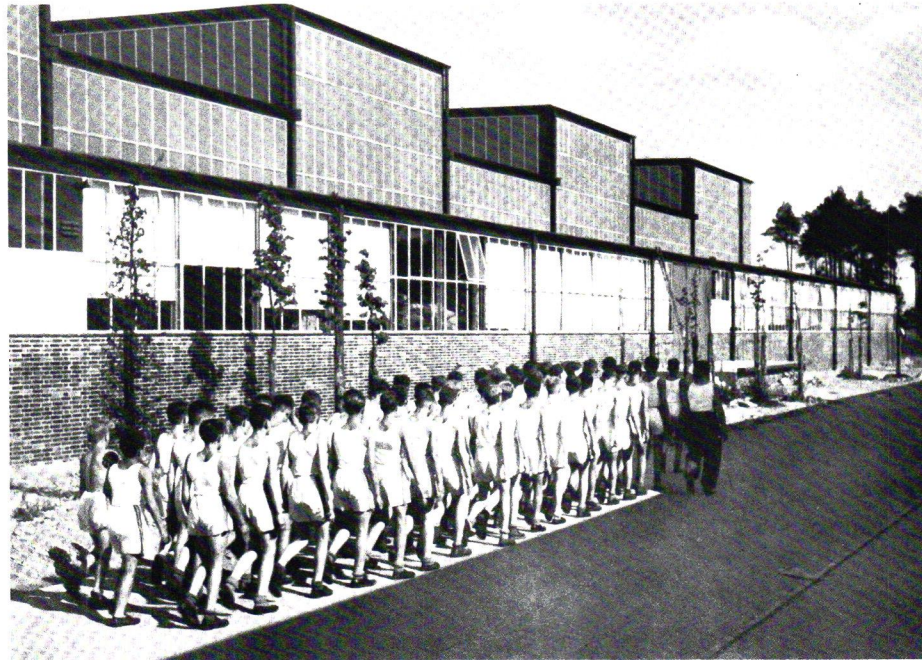
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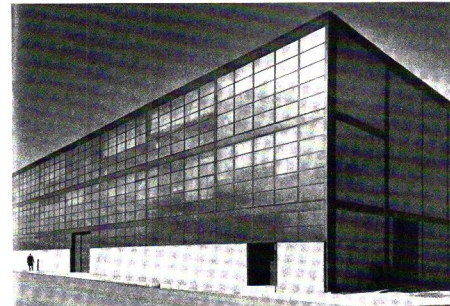
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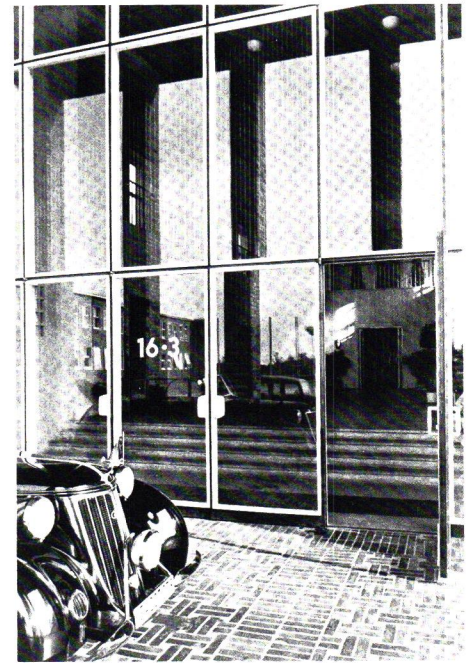


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54 Detail of the door to administration building.
 55 Formal and technical affinity between assembly building and the assembled product. The produktform of the factory itself testifies to the fact that Rimpl had been a pupil of Mies van der Rohe.



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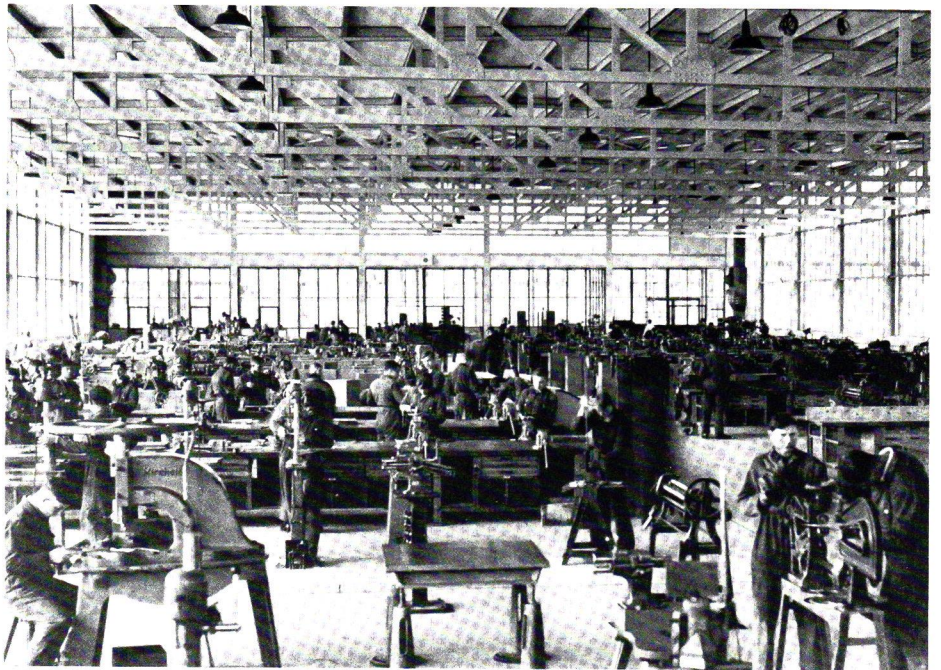


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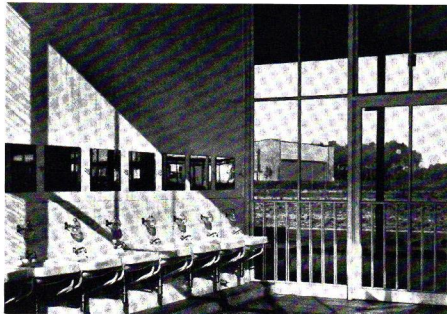
77

78 ***The Somnambulant Factory, 1936***

This whole complex, planned and detailed by Herbert Rimpl, exemplified in a remarkable way the full range of Nazi architectural ideology. At the same time, the sequence, text, and layout of the official publication of this work create an impact which is almost cinematic. One feels that one is looking at a series of film stills for which one only needs to provide the soundtrack and the score. The opening idealized images of the virgin site in which the factory is to be erected and the ritualistic act of ground-breaking are answered at the end of the book by images of the Heimatstil workers' housing, which convey the illusion that agrarian life goes on as before. The hand of the management is invisible in this reportage. The illusion is that only workers occupy this plant, and then they seem to do so with an air which is somnambulant and distracted. The presence of absence is everywhere; even the workers seem to be frozen beyond the freezing normally introduced by the shutter of the camera.



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56 The official caption read: "The training workshop provides instruction in all types of machine tools. The glazed hall of the shed opens toward the southern sun while the opposite side faces onto the greenery of the woods."

57 The official caption read: "The sun pervades all spaces . . ."

58 Récreation to rule. Workers relaxing on a factory terrace during an official break.

59 Heinkel Factory Workers' Housing, Oranienberg. H. Rimpl, 1937.

60, 61 Workers' Housing. The return of the agrarian dream, masking modern methods of surveillance and communication.



59



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62 Stuttgart Railroad Terminus.
Paul Bonatz, 1913–27.

63, 64 Alternative Autobahn bridge
designs. Paul Bonatz, Karl
Schaechterle, and Friedrich Tamms,
1936.

65 Welded steel suspension bridge,
Cologne. Peter Behrens, 1911.

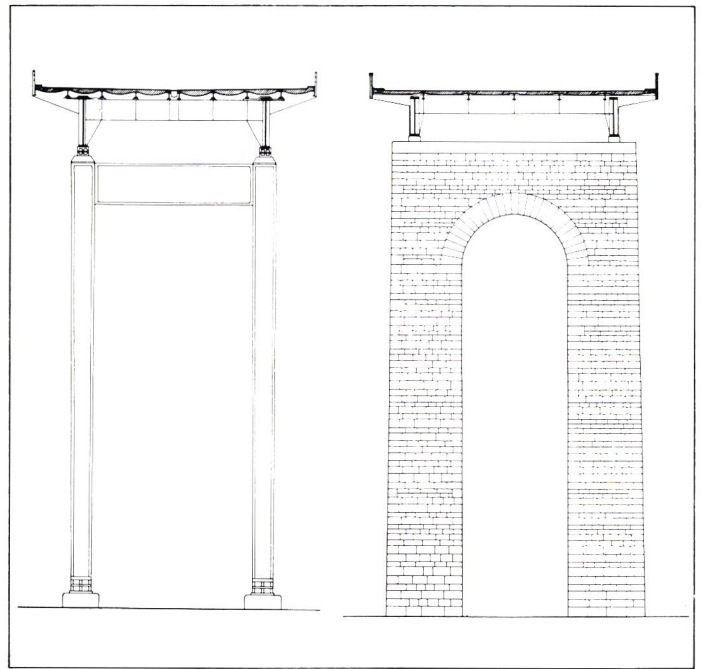
66 Adolf Hitler Bridge in welded
steel, Krefeld. Friedrich Voss,
1934–35.

67 Poster advertising the KdF
wagen, 1938.

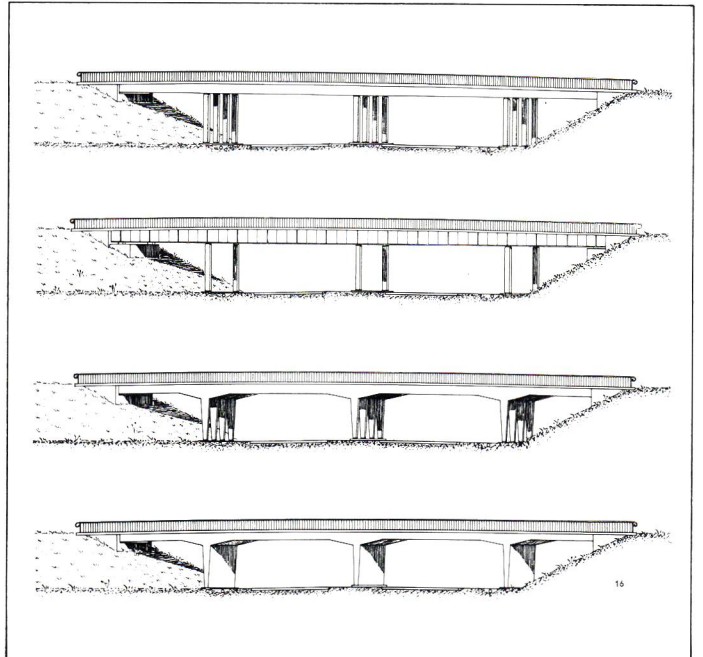
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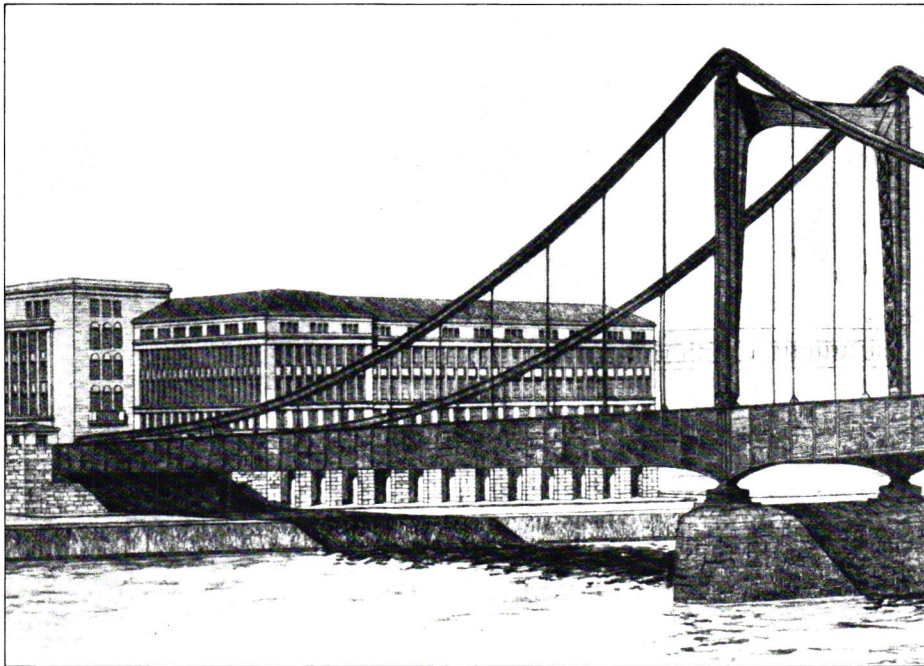
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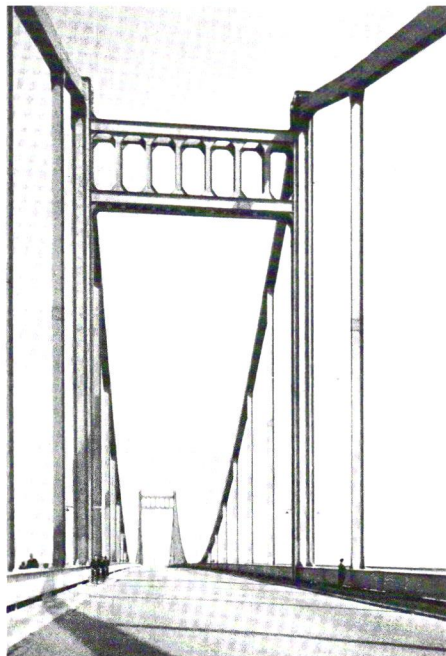
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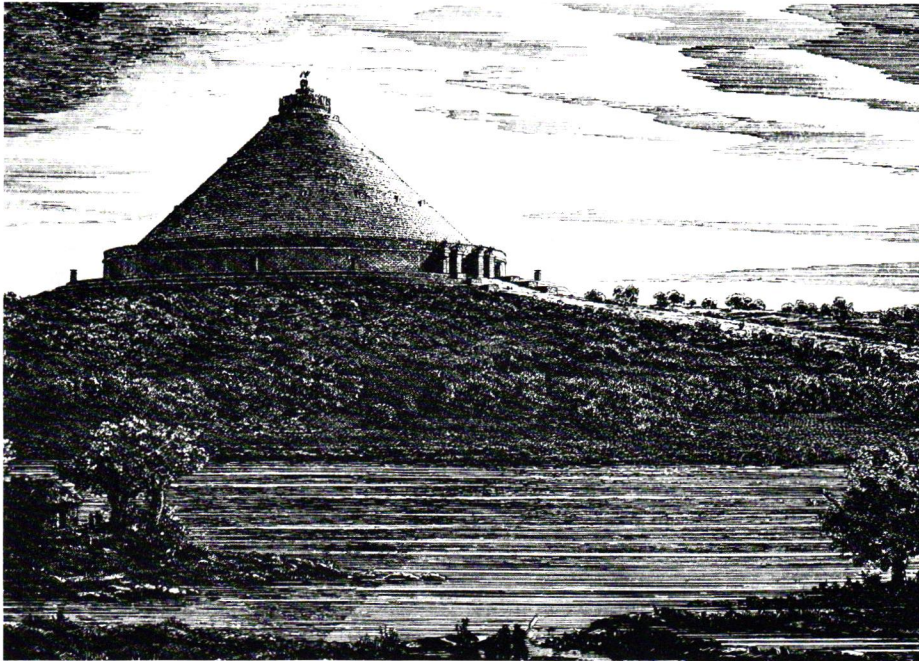
The Production of Joy

The work of the most brilliant technocrat of the Third Reich Fritz Todt, designer of the Autobahn, was complemented by the efforts of one of its most brilliant engineers, Ferdinand Porsche, the inventor of the people's car, the KdF wagen, known after 1945 as the Volkswagen. The first sections of the Autobahn, a four-lane, two-way highway were built at a remarkable speed: Darmstadt to Frankfurt, 1933-35; Saarbrücken to Kaiserlantern, 1935-37. The spectacular bridges built for this network were designed under Todt's direction, with the participation of other engineers and architects including Karl Schaechterle, Friederich Tamms, Hans Freese, and Paul Bonatz. Bonatz's contributions to this undertaking were decidedly Roman but executed in an elegant syntax that condensed the themes broached in his Stuttgart station and in his United Steel Works offices, Düsseldorf, 1922-24. In his supports for steel spans, Bonatz sought, somewhat after Behrens's example, to achieve a mediation between the stereometry of masonry and the web work of welded steel. The Volkswagen, symbol of the national socialist "Volk" community, did not become available until after the war, although a savings stamp system for potential buyers was started in 1938.

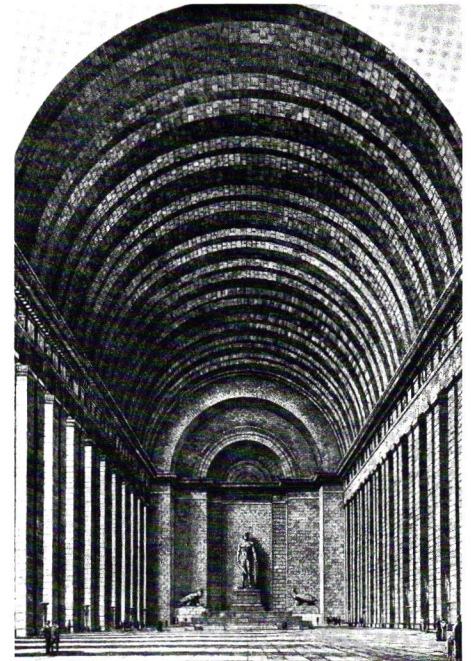
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68, 69 War Memorial, Russian front. W. Kreis, 1943.
 70 Soldatenhalle, Memorial Hall. W. Kreis, 1942.
 71 War Memorial, Kutno. W. Kreis, 1943. The pylons are similar to those lining the streets of Munich erected to the 'martyrs' of March 1936.

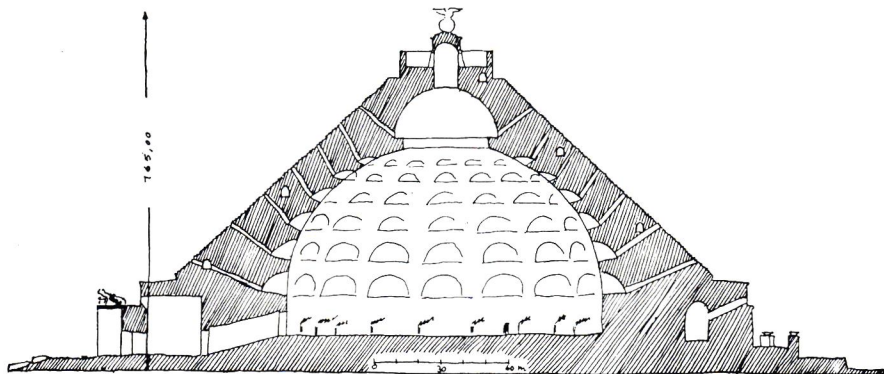
72 Cenotaph project. Etienne Boullée, n.d.
 73 Cemetery, Modena. Aldo Rossi, 1971. The entrance to the house of the dead with the communal grave beyond.



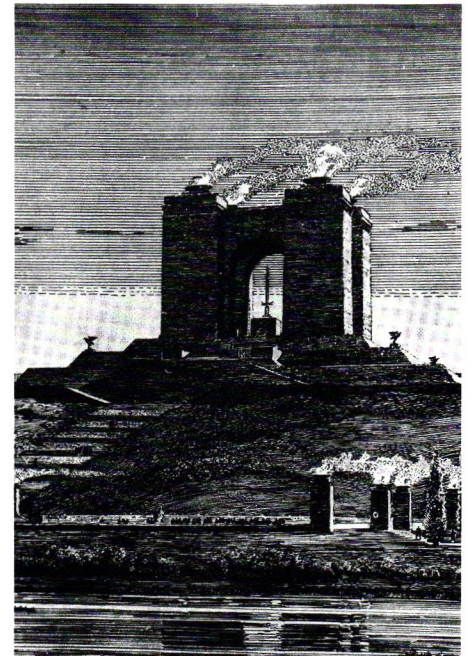
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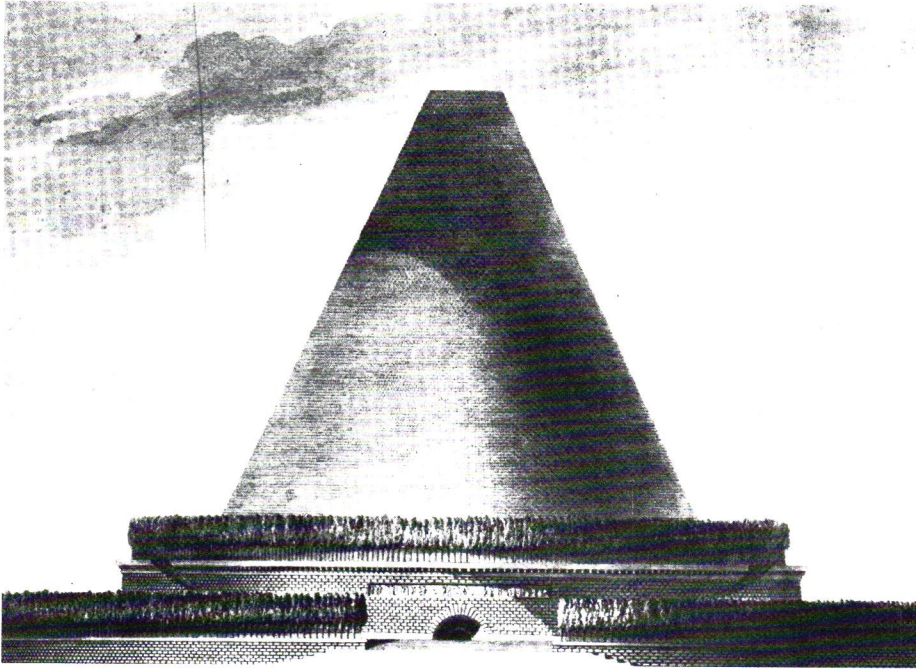
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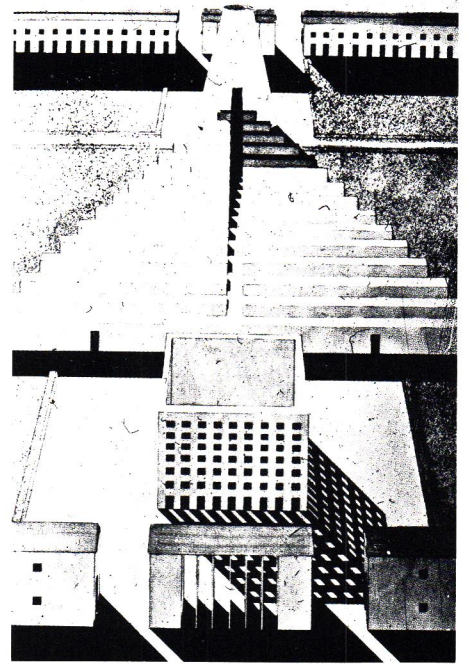


72

The Castles of the Dead, 1943

After a brilliant and varied career which before World War I included the design of numerous department stores for Wertheim and Tietz in Düsseldorf and Berlin, Wilhelm Kreis began to work extensively for NSDAP, with such commissions as the Soldatenhalle and the High Command headquarters, both dating from 1942. In 1943 Kreis designed a series of war memorials for the Russian, Balkan, and North African fronts. These “castles of the dead” or *Tötenurgen* were obviously based on neoclassical monuments of C. N. Ledoux and Etienne Boullée. The unbuilt, 765 meter high pyramid for the Russian front is typical in this respect with its massive, gloomy, spotlight, Gilly-like

interior. Even the rendering, with the sparse cortege of some remote fantasy civilization in mourning, is reminiscent of the work of Ledoux and Boullée. How is one to read this unconsciously pathetic commentary on the destiny of the Enlightenment and, even further, how to interpret Rossi’s appropriation of the same heritage in the cemetery at Modena?



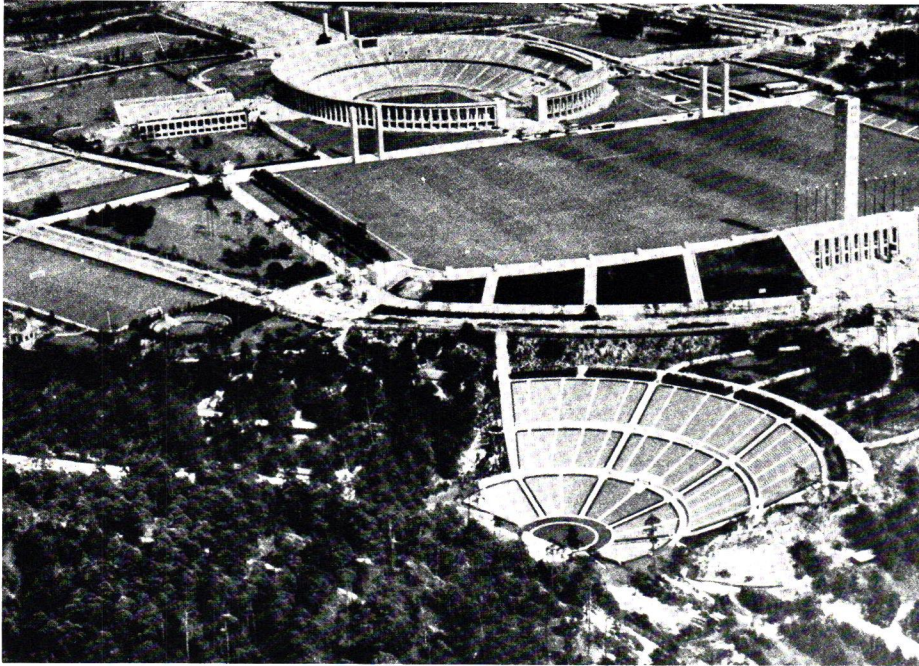
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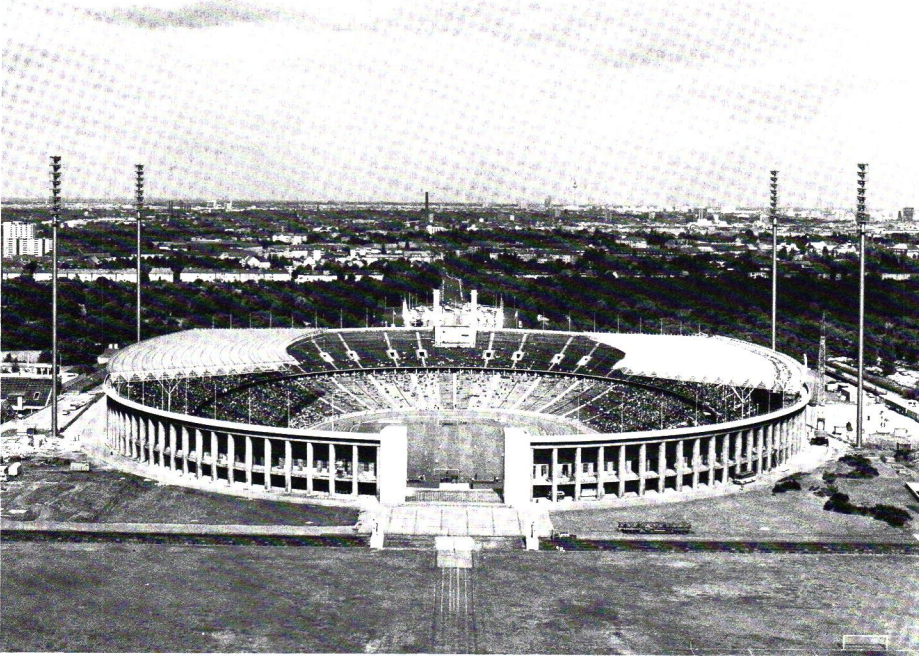
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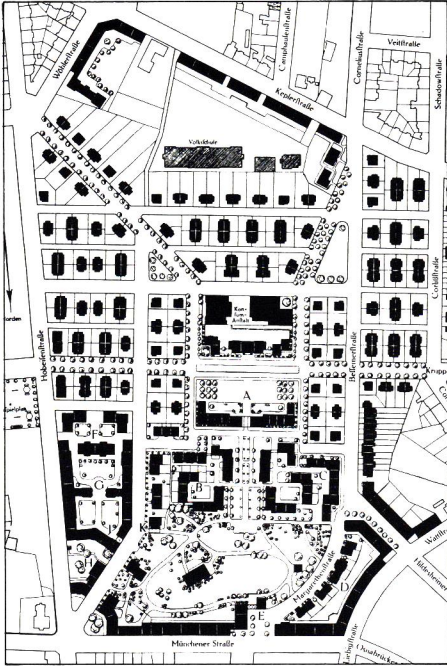


77

74, 75 Tempelhof Airport. Ernst Sagebiel, 1936. Main entrance with Berlin Airlift monument of 1963, and interior of cantilevered reception shed on other side of the block, with planes taxiing out.
76, 77 Olympic Site and Stadium, Berlin. Werner March, 1936.

Olympic Interlude, Berlin 1936

Although Werner March used more abstract forms than Speer, he still finished his balustrades and column heads with classical profiles. Despite Jesse Owens's unwelcome triumph, the 1936 Olympics afforded the occasion for a major propaganda campaign confirming Hitler's prestige both at home and abroad. A major component in this operation was Leni Riefenstahl's spectacular documentary of the Olympics, so that like the Zeppelinfeld stadium, March's architecture had not only to function as a "scene" but also as a film set, that is to say as an arena in which the provision of pylons as camera positions was by no means a secondary consideration. Tempelhof Airport represented contact with the world at another level and afforded yet another instance in which the brilliance of German welded steel construction would outclass the more reactionary aspects of Third Reich architecture. Tempelhof was the last airport to be conceived as a nineteenth century railway terminus, a conception which naturally re-evoked the old conflict between the head building and the shed.



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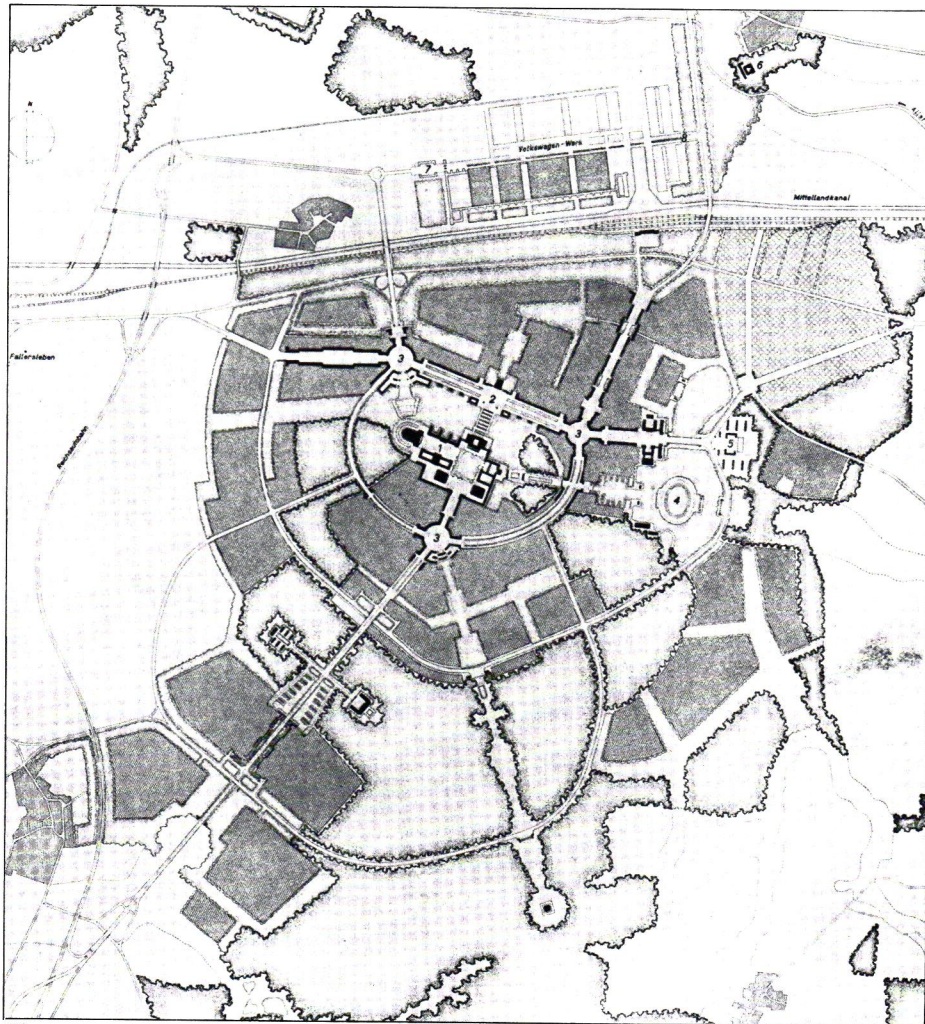


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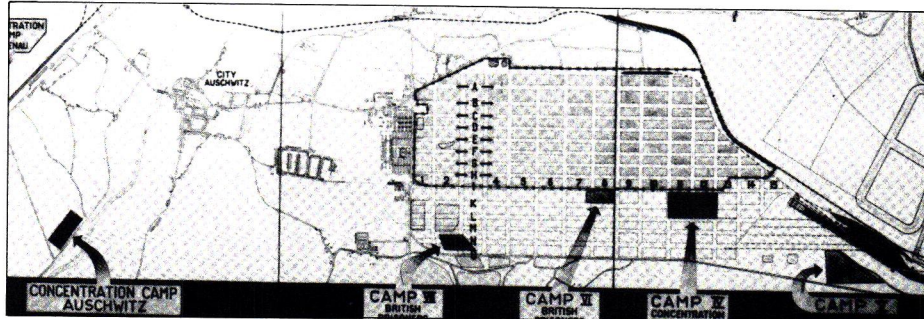
Scenography and Steel

From the time of the Krupp Siedlungen the German industrial garden city constantly oscillated between a normative orthogonal classical layout and a picturesque scenography appropriate to the rural myth. The Nazi garden city was no exception to this, although its scenography after Capability Brown was such as to embrace the entire landscape, as in Peter Koller's 1937 plan for the KdF Wagen City of Wolfsburg on which work started in 1938 and which created a new landscape out of twenty-eight agrarian settlements. Koller's approach to landscape followed Speer's Nuremberg plan in which the forest was carved away to produce a new scenic space. At

Wolfsburg this space was complemented by continuous streets which while only one block deep were capable of suggesting the continuity of the city. Note the way in which the scenography of Wolfsburg is cut by the canal and the rail from the articulated industrial form of the plant itself, construction of which was started in 1938.



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78 *Siedlung Alfredhof, Essen.*
Robert Schmol for Friederich Krupp, A. G., 1907–10. Site plan.
 79 *Hermann-Goering Werke, city plan. Herbert Rimpl, 1939. Aerial Perspective.*

80 *KdF Wagen City, Wolfsburg.*
Peter Koller, 1937.

81 *Plan of the I. G. Farben Plant at Auschwitz and the layout of the various labor camps. The industrial city stripped of its scenography. This I. G. Farben subsidiary was the largest artificial oil and rubber factory in the world—plan showing relation of the forced labor camps necessary to its production. The entire Nazi war machine was fed from this plant. It consumed as much electricity as the city of Berlin.*

**Architecture (III):
Unpreparedness—Incomprehension—Prejudices
Architecture (IV): A New Archaic Era**

Il Gruppo 7
Introduction by Ellen R. Shapiro

Introduction

Gruppo 7's experience at the Milan Politecnico provided the starting point in their third article for a discussion of the problems their aesthetic was encountering along the difficult road to its acceptance. The problem of architectural training plagued the members of the group, who felt trapped within the confines of an anachronistic Beaux Arts system. Author Rava and his colleagues objected to the failure of their schooling to integrate the "artistic" and the "practical-scientific." While they did recognize the importance of a classical tradition in the teaching of architecture, they quickly qualified its contents: their choice of the Parthenon over the Monument to Victor Emmanuel II as an example speaks for itself (figs. 1, 2).

But they were not the first in this century in Italy to complain about the burden of a misunderstood classicism. Antonio Sant'Elia in fact had expressed the same sentiment in 1914, perhaps even more forcefully, when he condemned the "supreme imbecility of modern architecture, which repeats itself for the mercantile complicity of the academies, the forced residences of intelligence where youth are compelled to the onanistic recopying of classical models."¹

Obviously, the situation had not changed much by the mid-twenties. Indeed, the sense of profound frustration which emerges from these last articles, and from the Group's entire polemic, is rooted in their rejection of five years of training at the Politecnico. This attitude is understandable when one considers that the outstanding personalities among the faculty were such champions of the Beaux Arts and *Stile Liberty* as Piero Portaluppi, Ulisse Stacchini, and Gaetano Moretti, director of the program.² Works like Stacchini's Central Station in Milan (fig. 3) and Portaluppi's Electrical Power Station in Crevola (fig. 4) could hardly be expected to serve as models for the members of Gruppo 7. In addition, these professors had failed, according to the Group, to impart the necessary respect for the value of a technical aesthetic. Rava and his friends accused their teachers of practicing "the separation of two inseparable subjects, the artistic and the practical-scientific," which "almost diverge." The

1 *The Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens. Ictinos and Calicrates, 448–432 B.C.*

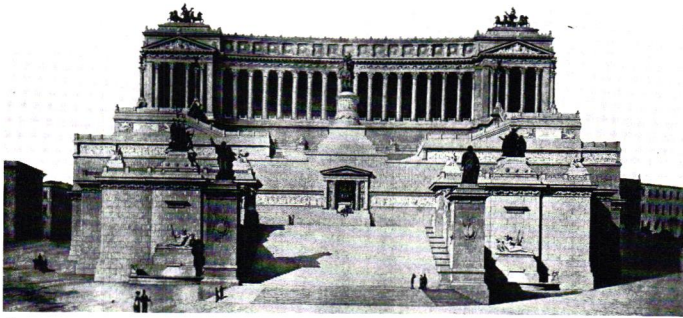
2 *Monument to Victor Emmanuel II, Rome. Giuseppe Sacconi, 1884. Design, final competition.*

3 *Central Station, Milan. Ulisse Stacchini, 1912. Original design.*

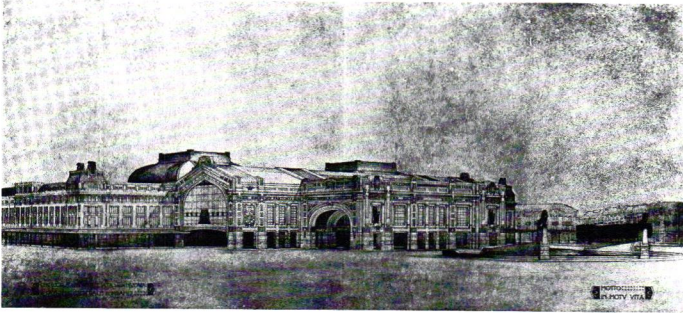
4 *Electrical Power Station, Crevola. Piero Portaluppi.*



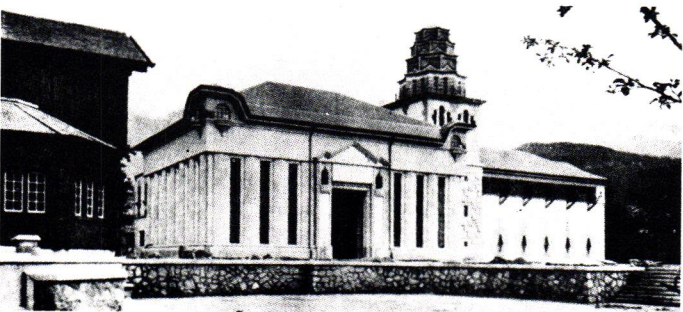
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2



3



4

Milan students, though, it must be remembered, were among the more fortunate of their contemporaries in Italy with regard to schooling, as testimony from other architecture schools at the time proves.³ Yet the Politecnico students were forced to study in an atmosphere where, as Pollini has pointed out,⁴ they felt compelled to hide copies of Le Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture* and Gropius's *Internationale Neue Baukunst*, which they discussed outside the school. And it can certainly come as no surprise that in such an atmosphere both Terragni and Figini failed their degree examinations, which they were forced to repeat in the fall session.

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In addition to the shortcomings of their formal education, the graduates had to deal also with the thorny problem of the blind prejudices of an unenlightened public. The widespread suspicion of “foreign” character in architecture effectively blocked any public acceptance of their aesthetic. This attitude, they insisted, arose from “a bourgeois conception of art and life, which prohibits one from seeing and even suspecting the existence of a new spirit,” and was fostered by the attacks of art critics. Marziano Bernardi's letters in this regard in *La Stampa* and *Rassegna Italiana*, which we publish here, were the most vociferous, and the Group devoted much space to defending their position from Bernardi's accusations of their supposed subordination of aesthetic fact to the idea of functionalism, and their repudiation of the importance of individuality in architecture.

In their final article, perhaps the most prophetic of the four, Gruppo 7 defended the use of reinforced concrete and cited its aesthetic possibilities and its potential for attaining “monumental classicism.” Most importantly, this last article compared the Group's efforts to those of the architects of the “archaic” period in Greek architecture. It declared the existence of a *new* archaic era in architecture, with a renunciation of individuality and a creation of fundamental types to be used in future selection. And certain of the eventual acceptance of their proposals, they wrote: “Our eyes aren't as yet used to the new aesthetic . . . but little by little . . . the evolution will come about, taste will change . . . people will recognize the monumen-

90 tal possibilities and *our own* characteristics in buildings now defined as being of 'foreign taste'."

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to their enterprise was just this nascent xenophobia. They had to deal, after all, with frequent accusations of Corbusianism, internationalism, and even Bolshevism which would eventually push them out of the orbit of official architecture after 1930. In the meantime, they opened Italy's eyes to the emergence of the most important architectural movement in this century. In Carlo Belli's words, ". . . perhaps for the first time after the Renaissance (or after the Baroque?) architecture reappeared to illuminate the path of a generation."⁵

1. Antonio Sant'Elia, "Manifesto dell'Architettura Futurista," in Bruno Zevi, *Storia dell'Architettura Moderna*, p. 222. Translation mine.

2. The engineering school of the Milan Politecnico was divided into three degree programs: civil engineering, industrial engineering, and architecture, all lasting five years. The degree program in architecture included courses in engineering covering technical and scientific material. For purely "artistic" instruction, the students studied at the Brera academy. The instruction common to both the school and the academy included:

Decoration and figure drawing—Prof. Fratino

Life drawing—Profs. Fratino and De Luca

Architecture (two years preparatory instruction)—Profs. Moretti and Portaluppi

Architecture I, II, III (three years instruction)—Profs. Moretti and Stacchini

Practical architecture—Profs. Brusconi and Portaluppi, from 1924

History of architecture—Profs. Carotti and Annoni, from 1924

Restoration of monuments—Prof. Annoni

Scenography—Prof. Fratino

My thanks to Professor Gianni Mezzanotte of Milan for kindly furnishing this information.

3. Rationalist architect Luigi Cosenza, for one, who received his degree in engineering from Naples in 1929, has described the situation there as "a horrible, repressive atmosphere, with an ignorant faculty. The school was more backward than those of Rome and Milan." From a conversation I had with Cosenza in Naples in April, 1978.

4. From a conversation I had with Pollini in Milan in June, 1978.

5. Carlo Belli, "Origini e Sviluppi del 'Gruppo 7,'" in *La Casa*, no. 6 (Rome: De Luca, 1959), p. 176.

Figure Credits

1 Reprinted from Walter Hege, *Akropolis* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1956).

2 Reprinted from *Ricordi di Architettura*, Vol. 7 (Florence, 1884).

3 Reprinted from *I Concorsi di Architettura in Italia* (Milan: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1913).

4 Reprinted from Cesare De Seta, *La cultura architettonica in Italia tra le due guerre* (Bari: Laterza, 1972).

**Architecture (III):
Unpreparedness—Incomprehension—Prejudices**

Il Gruppo 7

Translation by Ellen R. Shapiro

To the sole end, as we said,¹ of “completely illuminating the present architectural moment,” after seeing “the truly absolute and significant results attained abroad,” it now seems opportune to find out why the development of a truly modern architectural spirit, parallel to that in other countries, has been hindered in Italy. Perhaps the existence of a more apparent state of uncertainty, the result of real difficulties, still dominates architecture in this country, although it would not be difficult to free ourselves from such uncertainty. 91

It is easy to single out the causes for this: one of the gravest and most determining factors is certainly the *unpreparedness* of our architects in approaching technical problems with the right aesthetic understanding, so that a *technical aesthetic* might issue from their work in keeping with the new times. And the principle blame for this unpreparedness undoubtedly goes back to their *schooling*.

The subject of art schools touches problems of such complexity and vastness that we would need more space to discuss it. This is all the more so in the particularly difficult case of *architecture* schools, which ought to combine art and science in a way that is extremely difficult to resolve. But in limiting ourselves to pointing out a few errors of direction, it goes without saying that as our experience does not extend to all architecture schools, we admit that there may be schools where such mistakes are not made. We do hope, though, that soon these errors will not be made anywhere.

It is true, however, that with respect to the way they exist and function, some of these schools today appear to be anachronisms. Everything today is so renewed that certain methods of study, far removed from the necessities of present problems, and especially a certain *dogmatic imposition* of *fixed schemes* (since they are consecrated by false practice or confirmed by examples which we would rather forget) produce a painful sensation of blindness. What, in fact, should be the highest goal of an architecture school if not that of training the youth for his profession? But the results are so far from this that, we believe, there is no young architect who has not found

92 himself not only unprepared to face practical problems, an explainable phenomenon, but also *disoriented*, lost in the face of the equally serious problem of his own artistic personality, which the school has not formed but *disintegrated*.

Given these methods of study, we can easily see the difficulties that the architect has had in freeing himself from the very negative influences he has had to endure and in calmly facing today's architectural problem. Naturally, we do not mean that teaching must from its very beginning be based on principles of a technical aesthetic. This would be absurd. Nor is the hardly parallel and simultaneous alternative, or rather, the *separation* of two *inseparable* subjects, the artistic and the practical-scientific, admissible, they diverge almost everywhere, and if not in direct contrast they are at least opposed, giving rise to that deplorable disorientation we mentioned.

What's more, not only do we believe that a solid base of classical tradition is appropriate to the study of architecture, but we also believe it preferable that in the first years of teaching this base be much more absolute and exclusive. The teaching of this classical tradition, however, must be *enlightened*, so that it really is a *base* and not an obstacle to the young student. The examples used should be along the lines of the Parthenon, and not the Monument to Victor Emmanuel. After these solid first studies, and after the student survives the arduous task of copying and composition (it is hard to believe how desolate is the state of the insufficiently prepared student, who having to *create* for the first time, finds himself abandoned, with no one to guide him), a much different freedom could be granted. That is, even supposing that school work represents in part studies of style, two main points should be recognized once and for all: that styles not only are *not* represented by the twenty or thirty volumes the school owns, but that many of their most lively characteristics lie *exactly* and *precisely* in those elements which the textbooks classify as exceptional; that a study of style, in order to be profitable, must be the *interpretation of the spirit* of an age, *not* a study of the forms of certain architects.

Compare this broad valuation with the extremely narrow viewpoints in the schools that impede the individuality of students. Only in this way, at the end of his studies, but *while still in school*, could the young architect logically try his hand at *free creation*, which would mirror the necessities and characteristics of our time. And only in this way would he avoid a mistake still widespread among architects, and of which the schools themselves are guilty: the carelessness and contempt for industrial buildings, classified wrongly as material not worthy of being approached by the artist.

Another and no less serious obstacle is the *incomprehension* of the public. With a retardataire rhythm, the masses follow their own time, which is always *ahead* of them.² The inertia which dominates them forces them to dwell too long, with belated *over-delight*, on laboriously realized accomplishments. From this spiritual inertia follows a hatred for every novelty and for every appearance of novelty, which would inevitably end up disturbing such a state of mind.

Then there exists a bourgeois conception of art and life, which prohibits one from seeing and even suspecting the existence of a new spirit. Characteristic of such an attitude is the desire for a false and pompous wealth on the inside and outside of houses. We should note how the sense of the home has been lost, which should be, and always has been in great periods of art, a simple structure reflecting through its external appearance the spirit of necessity from which it was born. But today monumental elements are used for this, taken from buildings of former times (which adapt poorly to the six- or seven-storied buildings now in use), resulting in a false and unsuitable monumentality, which appears continuously. The public has thus lost sight of the practical problems of the logic and hygiene of the modern house. This has also contributed (surroundings influence the individual) to eliminating the possibility of clearly evaluating the work of art.

We can attribute the creation and diffusion of many prejudices in part to criticism, in large part to the writers on art, and to a past which, *only* because it is so often mis-

understood and distorted, weighs down upon us like a lead cloak and hinders any possible precise vision of the problems of contemporary art. These prejudices, transmitted to the public, have come back to influence the very criticism which started them, and they are beginning to be part of the fundamental axioms which lie at the base of the currents of today's thought and culture.

There have been so many voices raised in defense of "tradition," and so many polemics for or against it, that we come to ask ourselves if, after all, we haven't *quibbled* too often about this word, or if its *true meaning* hasn't completely vanished from sight. If it is possible to delude ourselves about being modern in other arts (that is, belonging to our own time) when we are adopting forms from the past, to also construct buildings with pure forms from the past when today reinforced concrete inevitably imposes its own logical forms is an illusion which cannot even be discussed.

The great lesson of the past continues to be *misunderstood*. The mask of tradition helps hide any insincerities. Much of the modern architecture in our country consists of great insincerity.

Therefore, the skeletons of buildings continue to be methodically *hidden* in reinforced concrete, with a more or less disordered application of former styles. Since every relationship with the general structure has been severed, facades become organisms *in themselves*, decorative devices, insincere projections. Is this supposed to be tradition? There is no greater proof of our admiration than the fact that until today people wanted to adopt the past (or rather, in the majority of cases, *tear it apart*) that we can give. Our love for a tradition which we don't want to touch is unbiased, and precisely for this reason it is purer and greater.

Another misunderstanding: through a false interpretation of the national spirit several forms of *sure effect* have become classified as typically *ours*, and have therefore come to be used inside the country, but more especially to represent Italian art abroad. And these forms are cho-

sen almost always from the most banal and clumsy collections of stylistic manuals, or are sanctioned by the customs of academic superficiality. *Beyond* these classifications naturally stands *anti-nationalism, foreign imitation*. Now, if people want to give this meaning to the word "tradition," then they should realize that forcing the least noble and most abused academic architectural forms to represent our country (and abroad these forms become the *symbol* of the Italian spirit) is the same as wanting to arrest its continuing progress in the conquest of the spirit, which has always given it first place and almost an *investiture* to dictate the forms of *true* art.

Some of these still very absolute prejudices seem to be transforming themselves, or better, disappearing. An atmosphere is now forming which is more sympathetic to the needs of the new times, more with respect to the need to abandon certain schemes, even if they were temporarily useful. Thus the recent neoclassical experience (one of the most notable kinds to fight many prejudices and many old customs, but still an experience and, as such, *temporary*), is beginning to decline; it is symptomatic how the most noted painters of the Novecento, who were in a certain sense its creators, have abandoned it.

Allow us to clarify one point in this regard: as always happens, the first article of "Gruppo 7,"³ which seemed (and was, but only partly) a platform, has given rise to many arbitrary interpretations of our concepts. There were those who construed the little faith we showed in the possibilities of evolution in the neoclassical movement as an attack executed with particular venom against that school. Now, we have the utmost respect for all trends, but we reserve the right to decide not to follow them, and to give our reasons for doing so. The neoclassical movement, even in its various expressions in this or that branch of art, makes up one whole. Consequently, seeing the complete *abandonment* of neoclassicism in painting recognized and *attested to* by the most authoritative critics today (we cite the newspapers *Il Secolo, L'Ambrosiano, La Fiera Letteraria*) in regard to the small but important exhibition of the fifteen painters of the Novecento, we have had the satisfaction of declaring that such an evolu-

94 tion corresponds *in a parallel manner* to that which we held as necessary and imminent in architecture.

Again, in regard to neoclassicism, there were those who observed that the not recent works of some members of the Group had to do with that neoclassical tendency which the Group itself considers old-fashioned. We had *already* replied in our first article to this *foreseen* objection when we said, in regard to our predecessors: “we have *in part followed them*, but we will no longer.” We never denied our debt of gratitude; in fact, quite a few times in these same writings we attested to it, and we would not want to deny or obscure an evolution. Indeed, we would like to point out that *exactly* and *precisely* the fact that we *tried out* a given tendency confers above all the right to abandon it and to recognize its uselessness.

Since we are on the subject of the objections made about the Group’s thesis, and of the various interpretations given it, we would like to mention a review which appeared in *La Stampa*. Mentioning this also allows us to reveal some of the typical attitudes of public opinion which we spoke of earlier.

Let’s pass over the facile accusation (we foresaw even this) of “Corbusianism”: we have already made sufficiently clear in our two preceding articles our position vis-à-vis Le Corbusier, and how much and exactly *what* all European architecture owes him independently of any imitation, so that it is not necessary to return to this. In the same way, let us pass over the characterization of “useless heroism” given to our theory of the temporary renunciation of individuality, a qualification that the author of the review would like to acknowledge as gratuitous, if not premature.⁴

In short, we would like to omit the points made most directly to the Group in order to make just one statement which has to do with art in general, and in our case, with *architecture in particular*. This concerns a truly amazing statement which sheds light on an entire way of thinking, which we believed and had hoped had disappeared in Italy, and which badly injured our country because of judg-

ments made abroad. So the review stated: “An object of beauty serves no purpose.” It follows that either architecture is not an object of beauty, or else it must be useless. This is the same as saying that if a house or *palazzo*, for example, is used for living, and is built toward that end, then it could, according to the author of the article, *under no circumstances* enter into the category of art. But if, even lacking that rational distribution of every part which, in working out all the necessities, makes it right for its purpose, it is clothed in the forms of art (completely insincere, since they would not correspond to *anything*), as such it would constitute a work of beauty. Up until this point, the concept of architecture is distorted: that architecture, which since its prehistoric origins, was born above all *to serve man!* The harmful results of similar approximative and dilettantish theories are so obvious that it does not even seem necessary to comment on them. We will limit ourselves to deploring the fact that they still have some weight in Italy.

Finally, we would like to clarify one last thing: if there was ever anyone who, from the very beginning, gave our movement that sincere praise which, because it shows a *real* understanding of our enterprise, is the greatest reward of every effort (we cite the newspaper *Il Tevere*), there were also those who, in poorly interpreting our concepts, praised us for intentions we did not even have. That is, some people believed that we were passing judgment on a vast culture in every field of art as an absolute condition for being the perfect architect; and such a supposed condition was approved. Now we are not dealing with this at all. It is not so difficult to make oneself cultured, and doing so would *not at all* change the *sensibility* of an architect who lacked sensibility and culture before. We are talking about something entirely different. We said, and we still maintain, that the consciousness of the great era of creation of which we stand at the beginning *necessarily* causes the architect to see how the new architecture not only is intimately connected with all other forms of a new art, but also *dominates*⁵ this great play of influences, of echoes and reflexes, which, through sculpture and painting, goes from literature to music; that the architect should give the *basic tone* to this new geometry,

which shares as much with the mechanical spirit as it does with the Greek (maybe they are the same thing, and are called "new spirit"); that we must reach this point, and that it is not easy.

As can be seen, culture is an entirely different thing.

Milan, 26 February 1927.

"*Architecture (III): Unpreparedness—Incomprehension—Prejudices*" is the third of four articles published in *Rassegna Italiana* from December 1926 to May 1927. The first two articles appeared in English in *Oppositions 6, Fall 1976*.—Ed.

1. See Il Gruppo 7, "Architettura (II): Gli Stranieri," *Rassegna Italiana*, February 1927 (*Oppositions 6, Fall 1976*.—Ed.)

2. Cf. Jean Cocteau, "Le Coq et l'Arlequin."

3. Il Gruppo 7, "Architettura," *Rassegna Italiana*, December 1926; translated in *Oppositions 6, Fall 1976*.—Ed.

4. He begins the sentence: "Before a self-denial of this kind which resembles a real asceticism . . ." This is another example of those rhetorical uses according to a fixed scheme so established in our country: where people speak of renunciation, whatever the story is, without paying attention to whether, as here, it is a question of a very proud renunciation, we can be sure that the characterization of "asceticism" will certainly figure.

But this system of generalizing in too hurried a way can sometimes prove dangerous. So we read further on that the aesthetic of cars, if there is such a thing, "is accidental and voluntary, if not in the details, which, in a different case, would no longer be cars, but works of art." Therefore we propose that the transformation of the automobile from the grotesque appearance it had in 1907 to the very elegant lines it has today would be "accidental and involuntary," due not to any pursuit of practical and aesthetic perfection together; otherwise the automobile "would be a work of art." On the contrary, the fact is that there really is no incompatibility between the two terms. The automobile is a machine, and in its category, can have an aesthetic value, in the same way that architecture is a work of art and can and must be, where required, a machine.

Thus, with the same system of unfounded deductions, the final part states that Florentine houses of the Quattrocento are of one type, a fact which derives "from the empire of the great triad: Brunelleschi, Michelozzo, Alberti." It really stupefies us when even official criticism has abandoned such convenient and mistaken theories only to find them again here. Fortunately, everyone realizes by now that the greatest architects of every epoch (with the exception perhaps of Michelangelo) did nothing but collect, fuse, and recreate in a perfect synthesis the best that *their epoch* had given before and contemporaneously. Thus, even Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Michelozzo brought the anonymous types created before their time to the highest perfection. They did not invent from scratch. And our movement really tends singly toward a collective effort to produce those *types* which might serve future selection.

We can almost see them, Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Michelozzo, gathered around the same table to establish, for the convenience of their contemporaries and descendants, the precise characteristics of the Florentine *palazzo* of the Quattrocento. And then, why Michelozzo, and not Cronaca or Baccio d'Agnolo, or Giuliano da Majano, for example? You see how much injustice there is in these hurried definitions, which tend to summarize such complex concepts in a few words!

5. Just now in *La Fiera Letteraria* a study by Ardengo Soffici has come out which discusses the "corporation of the arts," one of whose points we have happily been able to compare with the concept we put forth here.

Architecture (IV): A New Archaic Era¹

Il Gruppo 7

Translation by Ellen R. Shapiro

96 This brief series of articles² was intended more than anything else to be a statement of some of the ideas and the reasons for the birth of our movement. It will no doubt be clear how the *certainty* that a “New Spirit” exists, posited as a necessary base and incentive for the inquiries in our first article, recalled in the second in relation to those “absolute elements” of the new architecture which confirms its existence, and reaffirmed at the end of the third article, constitutes the great force and thrust of generations of young people who by now all over Europe recognize, under varied appearances, its unique essence.

Nevertheless, if we limit ourselves to looking at the results in the figurative arts, it is evident how architecture, in relation to the other arts, holds quite a privileged position. In fact, painting and sculpture, fortunately distinguishing themselves in the periods immediately before through a general certainty of taste, may cause one to suspect that their renewal is in part willed, artificial, and sham: the monumental primitivism of the followers of Picasso, the Hellenizing mystery of the metaphysicians, the “magical realism” of the most recent Germans, the overinnocence of the false “*doganieri*,” the archaic simplification of certain sculptures—in spite of some indisputable and very significant and reassuring *analogies* among them (which confirm the general renewal). Having, on the other hand, neither an absolutely necessary reason nor a secure logical basis for their birth in one form instead of another, they can create the impression that they represent the fashion of the moment, rather than the characteristic of an era. And if this does not detract (quite the contrary!) from their present interest, it can in any case leave uncertainties in judging their absolute value.

On the other hand, architecture finds itself newly in possession of a marvelous tool, *reinforced concrete*,³ which we can really consider *new*, since the way we have used it until now, believing it necessary to hide the truth of a material under false casings and forcing it into typical stylistic schemes, has ended up causing us to keep on ignoring its extraordinary *aesthetic* possibilities (which revolutionize the architectonic inquiry at its very base). In this it possesses the *sure necessity* of its renewal.

According to age-old tradition, stone and brick have their own aesthetic, born from constructive possibilities by now *instinctive* to us. The meaning of ancient architecture lies in the effort to conquer the weight of the material, which makes it tend toward the ground. Rhythm was born from overcoming this static difficulty. The eye was pleased by an element or by a composition of elements when it or they, through form or placement, reached perfect static rest. It is clear from this investigation how traditional proportions, objects, and dimensions came about. Now, with reinforced concrete, this scale of values loses its sense and its entire *raison d'être*. From its new possibilities (enormous projections, huge openings, and the consequent use of glass as a *surface value*, horizontal stratification, slender pilasters) it necessarily derives a new aesthetic, totally different from the traditional one. And the general skeleton of the building, the rhythmic division of the solids and voids, takes on entirely new forms.

It is understandable that the new aesthetic of reinforced concrete completely escapes most people accustomed to the traditional aesthetic, and worse, is denied by them. More broad-minded people admit at most that the new material can be used in its constructive purity only for buildings of an industrial nature, and that a special aesthetic can be derived from them, not lacking artistic value, but not extensible to other forms of architecture. Others at most admit a compromise between constructive rationalism and some other element renewed from past art. And these are the best cases. But almost everyone in Italy denies that reinforced concrete can attain *monumental value*. Now there is nothing more mistaken. If there is any material susceptible of achieving classical monumentality, it is *precisely* reinforced concrete, and it derives this quality from *rationalism*.

Not wanting to give too much importance to a building which represents a still imperfect and transitory state, we are nonetheless certain that the workshops of the Fiat factory at Lingotto, one of the few examples of Italian industrial building that has some architectonic value, prove that from the perfect adherence of solutions to given necessities (in this case from the apparently paradoxical

audacity of placing the large curved track on the roof of the building, and from the logic of such a decision) there can arise a plastic form having *value in itself*. It is evident that *in this way, perfecting itself through selection, monumentality can be reached*. Not dissimilarly, Rome resolved the problem of the amphitheater by creating an organism so perfect and vital that today the Colosseum constitutes for us a plastic form with absolute monumental value, independent of the purpose for which it was created.

We have said enough about the composition of *volumes*. In regard to *elements*, we saw how some of them, having absolute and analogous value when they were not identical, were already created in all countries. But naturally we are still at the beginning of this investigation. While on the one hand, reinforced concrete offers fundamental connections that constitute for the architecture which derives from it one of the greatest reasons, for *certainty* (since there can be no art that does not overcome restraints and difficulties), it offers, on the other hand, a magnificent and extremely vast range of ever increasing *possibilities*.

What is more, just as from the *formal* point of view the analogy of straight and fine elements, the simplicity of the plans, and the calm rhythm of solids and voids where the alternation of geometric shades creates a composition of spaces and values recall the periods of the beginning of Greek architecture; so from the point of view of its *development*, we can recognize all the characteristics of a new *ARCHAIC PERIOD* in the history of architecture: standing at the beginning of a great future though as yet having established but a small part of its characteristics, and expecting the attainment of a fuller art through its natural evolution, this rebirth exists within a general movement of rebirth; it accompanies it and will dominate it.⁴

This concept of a *spontaneous*, logical, necessary (since it is imposed by a set of conditions) *archaic return*, can clarify many points which at first gave rise to mistaken interpretations. It seems useful to take them up again here as a conclusion, in particular our theory of the *ren-*

unciation of individualism. We have already said that we considered this renunciation above all a temporary necessity, partly with a curative value, in order to stem the extremely dangerous disorder of ideas, tendencies, and styles which make the conditions of Italian architecture so uncertain. Besides, even foreseeing that the theory would be attacked, we did not think it necessary to clarify one point, since it seemed so obvious: by “renunciation of individualism” we never meant to propose the absurd idea that an architect must force himself to repress those *spontaneous* characteristics which would distinguish him from another: a leveling of this kind could never result in anything useful. What is more, it would be insincere and therefore *in open contrast* to our movement. On the contrary, we meant and we mean that the desire (even if basically good) to emerge leads too often to an *artificial* effort to distinguish oneself, to detach oneself from all the others; that such ambitions to “create a style” almost always end up in an originality of uncertain taste, in compositions and caricatures of traditional elements (possibly little noticed or transformed) which perhaps do not lack spirit but certainly lack solidity and architectural seriousness. In conclusion, this is harmful dilettantism more than anything else, just as a certain excessive “ability” constitutes a danger.

Instead, the “renunciation of individualism” means:

Not wanting originality for its own sake.

Being satisfied with producing for future selection.

To tend in every way and with every effort toward UNIFICATION⁵ of style (this is the *first* condition for the birth of a truly Italian architecture), *composing everything with the same elements.*

Not being afraid to work from a base that might seem dry, and with means that might appear aesthetically limited.

Limiting to the utmost the number of elements used and refining them, to bring them to maximum perfection, to the abstract purity of rhythm.

It is clear how the concept of *building in series* is connected to this system, along with the concept of the creation of those fundamental “types” destined for future

98 selection, in the same way that those fundamental elements we pointed out are destined to perfect themselves continuously in the future. We realize that in speaking of "building in series" we lower the concept of art for many people. They fear monotony, poverty, lack of imagination and creative power. But in the first place, no one ever said that variety constitutes beauty. In the second place, building in series offers the possibility of varying the effects with very few elements. Finally and most importantly, as we have already said, *simplicity is not poverty* and to confuse the two reveals a lack of subtlety.

Our eyes are not as yet used to the new aesthetic, to its pure grandeur and serene beauty. But little by little, imperceptibly but surely, the evolution will come about, taste will change, perhaps is already changing. And so, just as people will recognize the monumental possibilities and *our own* characteristics in buildings now defined as being of "foreign taste," not because they imitate those buildings but simply because they link up with a *rationalistic* and anti-decorative tendency which has international worth,⁶ in the same way they will realize that the richest effects result not from useless ornament but from the combination of a *few* materials and *perfect* workmanship.

People will come to see that mosaics, gold, and marble perhaps never realized the magnificence, the degree of extreme elegance and refined luxury that can be attained with the intense brilliance of glass, with the precise outlines of smooth woods, with the glossy surfaces of shining metals. It will then be realized that the richness derived from these things is not minor, but only more secret, and that, aiming for *perfection in simplicity*, they represent *an extremely high degree of civilization*.

Perhaps, when everyone understands this, we can consider the archaic period of a new era closed.

"*Architecture (IV): A New Archaic Era*" is the last of four articles published in *Rassegna Italiana* from December 1926 to May 1927. The first two articles appeared in English in *Oppositions* 6, Fall 1976, and the third article is published in this issue.—Ed.

1. In our second article about foreign architecture, we announced the publication in a plate apart from the text of the model of a dye-works planned for Leningrad by Erich Mendelsohn; unfortunately, the reproduction came out poorly and we had to leave it out.

2. See *La Rassegna Italiana*, December 1926, February 1927, and March 1927.

3. For brevity's sake, under the rubric "reinforced concrete" we refer also to *iron* in all its new uses introduced today by the evolution of building techniques.

4. That the general rebirth through the work of a new spirit represents an "archaic return," and that architecture finds in this its surest base, is confirmed everywhere. In the first place, compare the very important recent studies by Nicola Berdiaeff. Then, Le Corbusier, for example, writes in regard to his project for the Palais des Nations competition of having been "forced to create forms susceptible of *enduring*, and not vanishing." Here is just one of the many signs that architectonic investigations have entered into a phase of greater certainty in relation to the other arts.

5. Unification, not leveling, as we already noted. Through unification, personal characteristics emerge anyway.

6. When dealing with a movement produced by complex and remote causes, and by new and radical necessities, as in this renewal of architecture, the precedence of a few years in the representation of some characteristics, even if a source of pride for the country or for the person who first experimented with them, cannot, nevertheless, confer the right of paternity of them. "German tendency" therefore means nothing *in this sense*, since it would bear another name, even if it were *identical* in substance, if another country had been the first to experiment with it.

With regard to Italy, already in our first article we declared that "the spirit of tradition is so profound in Italy that evidently, and almost mechanically, the new architecture will preserve a stamp which is typically *ours*." This proves how unfounded are the fears of excessive foreign influence. For example, one characteristic of the most recent German and Dutch architecture is an absolute *asymmetry* in the masses as much as in the elements. Now while we cannot deny that very notable resources and interesting results derive from this condition, we must nevertheless recognize that it does not satisfy the Italian aesthetic. Our classical substratum requires, if not absolute symmetry, then at least a play of compensations which balances the various parts.

Here is a sure guarantee of independence for Italian architecture, and a profound reason for originality.

Marziano Bernardi

Translation by *Ellen R. Shapiro*

From Milan we have the announcement of a new architecture—new, to tell the truth, up to a certain point, since for years *Le Corbusier* in his tough, lucid books, which are more like metaphysical treatises than practical formulations of architectural problems, has been preaching in a messianic way in France while building his houses with ruthless, clear, rigid, crystalline logic. But this announcement is of particular interest since it comes from Italy, from the new "Gruppo 7" comprised of the young architects *Ubaldo Castagnoli*, *Luigi Figini*, *Guido Frette*, *Sebastiano Larco*, *Gino Pollini*, *Carlo E. Rava*, and *Giuseppe Terragni*, and it is now appearing in the pages of *Tomaso Sillani's Rassegna Italiana*. What are the Seven saying, what do they want? Noting how elsewhere in Europe a "new spirit" has already been born, a prerogative of privileged times that is manifested in the perfect correspondence of the various forms of art and their influence upon one another, the Seven lament that the new architectural spirit has been long in developing in Italy. This spirit has arisen—so they say—not through a romantic concept of the systematic destruction of the past, but rather through a saturation of knowledge, a need for order, clarity, and simplicity, which condemns all the artifice and insincerity of even the two great Italian architectural tendencies, the Roman and the Milanese, the former imitating the Cinquecento, the latter, neoclassicism. "The new forms of architecture must receive aesthetic value solely from the character of necessity, and only then, by way of selection, will style be born, which is created not from nothing, but from the constant use of rationalism, of the perfect correspondence of the structure of a building to the purposes it proposes. We must therefore persuade ourselves that it is absolutely necessary to produce types, few and fundamental types, as Rome has already done, until the maximum result, until the complete sacrifice of the personality for the spirit of construction in series."

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Before this kind of abnegation, which resembles a true asceticism, we remain pensive, as when confronted with a certain collective and useless heroism. Obviously, no one denies that architecture too must adhere to the new necessities, for the modern machine derives from and is

Marziano Bernardi

Translation by *Ellen R. Shapiro*

100 altered by them. But the great ambiguity lies in the concept of usefulness: the machine must have a precise purpose; the object of beauty serves no purpose. The airplane, the car, the lathe can have, in fact do have, an aesthetic of their own: but this is accidental, involuntary, if not in the details; if the case were different they would not be machines anymore but works of art. Art arises exclusively from man, not from the thing itself, nor from its use. Destroy individuality (in aesthetics) and you end up destroying art. The stripped and already modern nobility of Florentine palazzi of the Quattrocento is of a unique type, the Seven affirm. This is true. But where does this unique type come from if not from the empire of the great triad Brunelleschi-Michelozzo-Alberti? We must always go back, not to the inert material or to utilitarian experience, but to the inventive genius of man so that art may be born and live.

We [Editors, *Rassegna Italiana*] received the following letter from Marziano Bernardi in Torino, editor of *La Stampa* and well known to readers of this magazine:

To the Editor,

I read in the latest issue (March, 1927) of *Rassegna Italiana* that one of my notes of seventy-one lines in *La Stampa* (January 24, 1927) written with regard to the first article published by "Gruppo 7" in your magazine had the honor of quite a lively reply which ends by complaining that ideas similar to those expressed by me can still carry weight in Italy.

In asking you the courtesy of a counter-reply, I certainly do not intend, in spite of the sometimes ironic and sometimes sympathetic tone in which my way of thinking was revealed, to stir up another of the usual polemics of a personal nature. Like those of a general nature, polemics of this kind are perfectly useless in art, and in the specific case of architecture, the act of building is much more useful and eloquent than talking about building. I intend simply to confirm and clarify certain points of the discussion—evidently not understood by "Gruppo 7" because of a very justifiable dialectical inexperience—which I believe advantageous to these same town-criers of the new architectural word.

Let us pass over the accusation of rhetoric made of me somewhat gratuitously ("Here is another example of those rhetorical uses according to a fixed scheme, so invalid for us etc."): I will always be happy to receive a lesson in style, and therefore in living, from an architect or a writer. Now let us get to the center of the question.

What scandalized "Gruppo 7" was my certainly not uncommon declaration that "an object of beauty serves no purpose"; a statement, the Seven commented, which is "truly amazing, which sheds light on an entire way of thinking which we believed and hoped had disappeared in Italy and which badly injured our country because of judgments made abroad." It is too facile a statement to be contested if taken in an absolute sense, but in the

particular case of the argument it is intended as an anti-term of the other affirmation of "Gruppo 7": "The new forms of architecture will have to receive their aesthetic value solely from the character of necessity." And not realizing the antithesis, they throw this back at me: "Consequently, either architecture is not an object of beauty, or else it must be useless. This is the same as saying that if a house or a palazzo, for example, is used for living and is built toward that end, it could not, according to the author of the article, in any case enter into the categories of art." Slow down, gentlemen; who ever dreamed of upholding such nonsense? If the Seven deduce such an arbitrary syllogism from my sentence, it is not my fault. And so they implicitly confirm what I wrote in my note in *La Stampa*: "the great ambiguity lies in the concept of usefulness." And while we are on the subject of scrutinizing words, it seems to me that the Seven—who ought to be enemies of narrow classifications—restrict the concept of architecture slightly too much to the example of the house-palazzo. Could it be that a column (Trajan's column), an obelisk (Psammetico's), a façade (the façade of Juvara juxtaposed with a medieval building like Palazzo Madama in Torino), a triumphal arch (the arch at Leptis), a monument (the Altar of the Fatherland) cannot be examples of architecture? And so how should they "receive aesthetic value from the sole character of necessity"? What else? "Gruppo 7" speaks of "architecture, which since its prehistoric origins, was born above all to serve man." Would someone please tell me what purpose the façade of San Marco serves? Or is this not architecture? And is the unfinished façade of the Tempio Malatestiano not architecture? If there was ever a builder who was not concerned with making his buildings be of use, this man was Leon Battista Alberti. And for this was he less of an architect?¹

The work of art—exactly in as much as it is a work of art—stands by itself, independent of any concept of usefulness and necessity. It can coincide with this concept. In fact, it is well to see to it that whatever is useful and necessary ends up being artistic as well. But to subordinate the aesthetic fact to an idea of usefulness

and necessity means to totally deny ideal value.

But I really thought that this tendentious way of looking at artistic creation *sub specie utilitatis* had been relegated to romantic reminiscence. And I am surprised that young people are bringing it back to the surface. In the same way, I have already been amazed by another affirmation: "Architecture cannot be individual any longer" (see the first article of "Gruppo 7" in *Rassegna Italiana*, December, 1926). And why? Do the Seven have so little faith in the enduring Italian ingeniousness, in the individual resources of our race of builders and artists, that they proclaim: "it is now necessary to sacrifice one's personality"? This is why, drawing the reproaches of the Group, I spoke of "useless heroism," all the more because the Group, contradicting itself, admits the possibility of the man of genius (no rarer in architecture than in painting or poetry, or music or sculpture) for whom it is "right to create from nothing, following only inspiration." These youths have a truly melancholy vision of the artistic future and maybe even of the present in renouncing beforehand all the joys of the imagination.

It seems that at the base of "Gruppo 7"'s concept of architecture is an ambiguity that weakens its aesthetic vitality: an ambiguity which tends to identify the concept of architecture with the concept of building instead of with that of building-art. A building can correspond perfectly to its original purpose and not be a work of art, and in that case not be an example of architecture either, according to the classic and universally recognized meaning of architecture as a free creative activity of the artistic imagination. The Seven discuss workshops, docks, silos, which probably have the same appearance everywhere in the world and are "not lacking a sense of grandeur"; and they note how "certain factories acquire a rhythm of Greek purity because, like the Parthenon, they are stripped of all that is superfluous and respond only to the character of necessity. In this sense the Parthenon has a mechanical value" (does the Parthenon have a mechanical value of necessity? this is a somewhat bold discovery . . .). I am

102 *not denying that some industrial buildings can be clothed in singularly pure lines and provoke a sensation of grandeur. Is this supposed to be a sensation of art? Not yet. Just as the intense traffic of an arsenal or a railroad station can appear very grandiose and engaging, it is not artistic until the point at which one of Dante's tercets or one of Monet's brushstrokes—that is to say, the poetic elaboration of an individual vision—recreates it in its turn.*

In conclusion: the character of necessity and utility is not sufficient to confer aesthetic value. They talk about the aesthetic of cars (let us note well, though, that they speak of the aesthetic of certain machines: those which are used by the public, not those which do their dark work in the hold of a ship or inside the walls of a power plant). Very well then. But don't they realize that this aesthetic is nothing more than the result of a struggle and a conciliation between the necessities imposed by the mechanism that has its needs and the modifying autonomy of man the creator who has his own taste and artistic sensibility? Then they cite the example of the transformation of the automobile. Wait a minute. In this case it is more a question of taste and fashion. The Fiat 501 already seems squat and heavy beside today's svelte 509. And how will it look tomorrow? Thus the automobile, precisely because of this disagreement between necessity and aesthetic sense, will never be considered a work of art. Necessities in themselves are not sufficient for creating art.

I would like to end, then, by repeating the words with which I ended the short note that started this brief debate: "We must always go back, not to the inert material or to utilitarian experience, but to the inventive genius of man so that art may be born and live."

Marziano Bernardi

Notes

1. *In relation to the influence of the great triad Brunelleschi, Michelozzo, Alberti on the architecture of the Florentine palazzi of the Quattrocento—an influence which the Seven challenge, stating that "even official criticism has abandoned such convenient and mistaken theories"—I send the Seven to The Architecture of the Quattrocento (part I, pp. 154, 326) by Adolfo Venturi, a book which they, being good architects, must certainly have read; the author, until proven otherwise, represents official criticism pretty well.*

Editors' Note [Rassegna Italiana]

Our valiant friends in "Gruppo 7" to whom this letter was directed will answer it in their fourth article, which will appear in the May issue of the magazine.

Il Gruppo 7

Translation by Ellen R. Shapiro

The April issue of *Rassegna Italiana* published Marziano Bernardi's answer to our note contained in the third article of the Group which appeared in March. Since we cannot polemicize, we will answer briefly.

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We will not return to the question of "individualism" since, independently of our contradictor, we have already reconsidered and explained the question in an exhaustive way, right in this last article. He will therefore find an answer to his own observations on that subject, which really is most important.

We would like, however, to clarify one thing immediately. Bernardi says that the interpretation we give to his statement that "an object of beauty serves no purpose" is arbitrary. The truth is that since the subject was architecture, we do not see how else the sentence could be interpreted, if not in relation to architecture. However, if Bernardi's phrase does not explain what he wanted to say, but rather what he did not want to say, it is not really our fault. If this is so, we too believe that in interpreting the hidden meaning, what is needed is quite a different dialectical experience from our limited one. Besides, we will always be happy to accept a lesson in dialectics from a man of letters, even though we are convinced that architecture can be discussed usefully and positively only among architects.

In fact it seems that it was Bernardi himself who gave his own interpretation to that concept of "necessity" which he qualifies with the term "romantic" (the "romantic reminiscence" consists, in fact, of "those joys of the imagination" he talks about in relation to architecture). We never meant to say that architecture must serve, in the sense Bernardi believes, solely "a value of necessity"; for a given architecture it means, clearly, that no element exists in it which is superfluous or which does not have a visible or hidden reason. The aesthetic of the building arises from such purity. In this sense, the fact that the Parthenon has a value of necessity is not a discovery, but a proven fact with nothing risky about it. On the contrary, we would say

104 that the Parthenon is one of the greatest examples of the spirit of necessity.

We indeed said that “architecture, at its beginning, was born to serve man.” But we certainly did not exclude the possibility that, through its development, it would take on decorative value too. So today, admitting the logical return of an archaic period which we affirm in this article, the very new architecture that corresponds to it is necessarily bare. But since we have said many times that our efforts tend solely to the end of preparing types for future selection, it happens consequently that architecture can enrich itself again and complete itself in the future with decoration. And this decoration, born spontaneously, can have a value of necessity, too. But Signor Bernardi always seems to forget that we are talking about today’s architecture and today’s needs.

He thus shows little success in identifying himself with the spirit of the youth movements. And in believing that these movements have little faith in the future, he is saddened by them. We do not know if Bernardi had the chance to visit “Gruppo 7”’s architecture room at the Monza Biennale; this, too, would make him sad. However, we are certain that then he would realize how far off he is from the youth of his time.

As for having mentioned solely the example “house-palazzo,” we limited ourselves to this out of the horror we have for too many facile illustrations.¹ If we let ourselves be carried away, we would each pull down another, like cherries, so that we would find ourselves face to face with the most unexpected and happy meetings: Psammetico’s obelisk with a Monet brushstroke, one of Dante’s tercets with a Juvara façade. It is clear, though, that our example could be extended (and we are leaving out industrial buildings since they are strictly utilitarian in origin, so in their case it is more evident than ever) even to churches and public buildings.

Marziano Bernardi rightly says that the concept of architecture should be identified with that of building-

art. Now, if he will admit it, this comes precisely out of all our articles. Instead, as much as he will say is that he considers architecture solely an art form (and this is not enough), so that he actually denies industrial buildings any value as art.

Finally, he asserts, and listen to this, that Alberti was “not concerned with making his buildings be of use.” We would like to know, since he seems to be in the habit of basing his opinions on those of authoritative sources, where he got such incredible information. Bernardi seems to ignore the fact that Alberti was a mathematician before he was an artist, and that he was closer than anyone ever to the purest spirit of necessity in all his buildings.

And he seems to forget that architecture is as much mathematics as it is art. But even this is more easily understood by an architect. Thus, we would like to conclude by remembering the comprehension with which our movement was discussed, right in Torino, in the February issue of *Architettura Italiana* (therefore not long after Bernardi’s first note), by a very well-known architect.

“Gruppo 7”

1. Certainly, even we have cited correspondences between various art forms, for which we have offered examples. But we were dealing with visible and sensible analogies, or, above all, those limited to works of the same period, representing various aspects of that period.

Otherwise, it is too easy to fall into amateurish or romantic confusion. Thus, Psammetico's obelisk, Trajan's column, and Juvara's façade for Palazzo Madama are considered architecture, when they are really three examples which lie at the edge of architecture, and fit rather into the category of decorative art, even if they are monumental. And these examples are mixed in with the façade of San Marco, precisely (and, it seems, purposely) one of the most hybrid monuments of architecture. And even though this work reveals a correspondence with the internal structure under the beauty of its facing, it represents one of the least sincere periods. And while the arch at Leptis is the only example on the list having a frankly constructive value since it corresponds to the required exigencies, the strange list closes, imagine this, with the Altar of the Fatherland—but it is better not to talk about that.

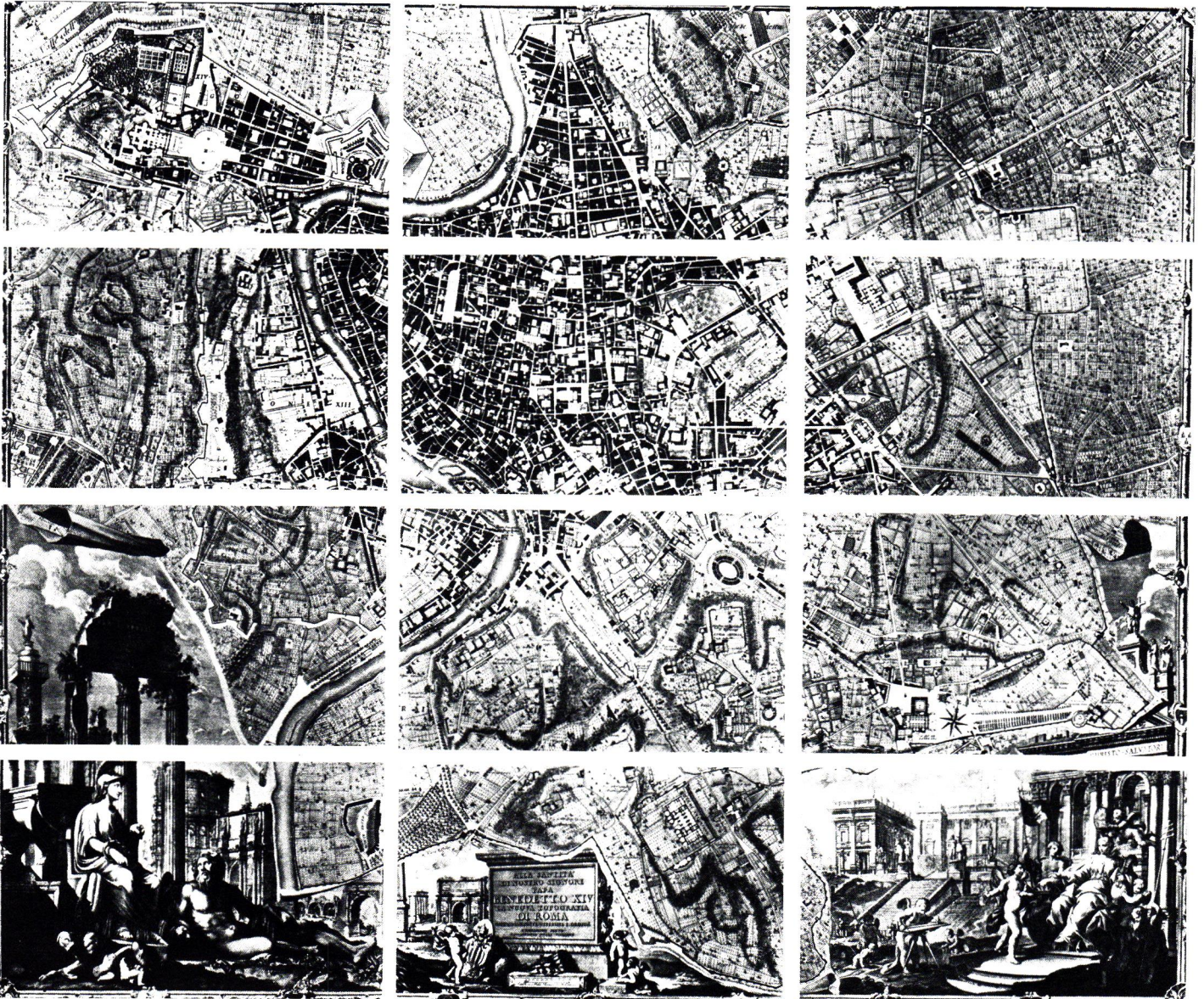
And yet it shows, for example, that we need the help of a Dante or a Monet (this is romanticism) to be able to appreciate the external value of a view of modern traffic. Perhaps because he lacks this help Signor Bernardi is so sure that the machines in a hold of a ship or in a power plant lack aesthetic value. But not everyone shares his uncertainty.

With regard to Venturi's reference to the "Quattrocento" in relation to Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Michelozzo, it does not seem to us at all that on pages 154 and 326 Venturi meant to give to his observations on the undeniable influence of the three architects the special extension Signor Bernardi gives them. If it is indeed so, then we are ready to admit that we were too optimistic in attributing to official criticism the breadth of ideas we mentioned.

Reviews and Letters

1 *Plan of Rome by Giovanni Battista Nolli (1748).*

2 *Twelve architects' "imaginary projects" based on Nolli's plan.*



Roma Interrotta

"Roma interrotta," an exhibition organized by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte and held at the Mercati di Traiano, Rome, May-June 1978.

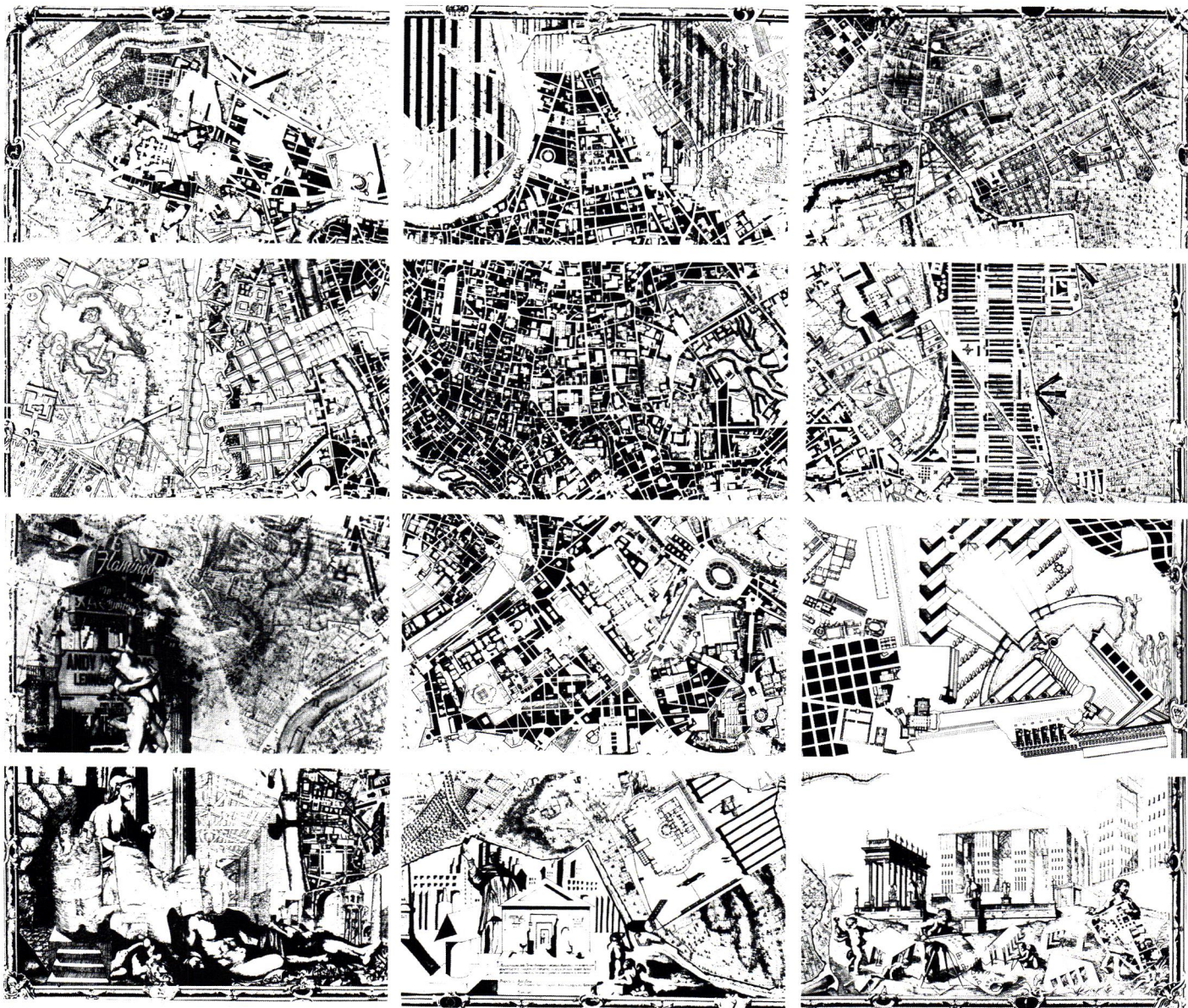
Catalogue, *Roma interrotta (Rome: Incontri Internazionali d'Arte officina edizioni, 1978)*.

Francesco Dal Co

SARTOGO
STIRLING
VENTURI
R. KRIER

DARDI
PORTOGHESI
ROWE
ROSSI

GRUMBACH
GIURGOLA
GRAVES
L. KRIER



Twelve architects, selected according to a logic that is difficult to understand, were invited to draw up an “imaginary project” for Rome. To each one of them one of the twelve divisions which form Giovanni Battista Nolli’s splendid plan of Rome of 1748 was given as the basis for as many “architectural fantasies” (figs. 1, 2). This is not the place to discuss whether such exploits are useful or not; we know that they are generally considered popular, and in fact they act as an eloquent index for the comprehension of the state of health of contemporary architectural work. Merely academic exercises, misleading opportunities for comparison, these invitations to the designer’s fantasy irresistibly provoke the incurable narcissism of architects, and provide them with indispensable sublimatory transfers. In practice these occasions have no other function than to alight the growing market for architectural exhibitions, which absorbs, with ever increasing ease, the products of an “international design brigade.”

In the case in point, the result was an exhibition called “Roma interrotta.” The title is undoubtedly intended to be ambiguous, particularly in the present situation which is fraught with polemics and moral indignation regarding the future (certainly not a very bright one) of modern Rome. But polemics and anathemas have no power at all—as has been shown by the experience of the past thirty years—to change anything in a city which has been so monstrously devastated. Nor does it make very much sense to expose latent possibilities for a radical transformation of the present-day city. In particular when these means turn to the most accepted models of the modern architectural tradition, or to clumsy anti-historical demolition with the aim of restoring a situation in which “honest architecture” can be built (almost as if to imply absolution for the soul of architecture from the disasters perpetrated by the “evil forces” responsible for the “sack of Rome”).¹ It is therefore surprising not to find the name

of Leonardo Benevolo among those invited to replan Rome: his observations and proposals, contained in his commendable volume *Roma, da ieri a domani*, seem to be ahead of the time in respect to the academic exercise proposed by the exhibition.² But whereas the proposals put forward by Benevolo claim to be practical, and are founded on deeply rooted historical prejudice (the writer’s scorn for the architectural and urbanistic transformations undergone by Rome after the unification of Italy are typical in this sense), the twelve architects of “Roma interrotta” seem to be more aware of their own limits. Their projects rise above any operative implication: putting their faith in the plan of Nolli, they do away with the embarrassing presence of modern Rome. Thus their games can be conducted with complete liberty: between the project and the subject of the project exists a playful relationship. When the issue is set out in these terms, it is clear that the title of the exhibition has very little meaning and throws little light on the operations attempted. For given the fact that the projects are on a “sporting” basis, and that the treatment is academic, the possibility of architectural commitment is terminated at the very moment in which the projects are hung on the exhibition walls. Rome, the city with its history and its problems, is merely an occasion: other “plans” for other cities would have provided equally valid programs.

But in what sense are we to understand the title, which must necessarily be our starting point? Perhaps a better title would have been “architettura interrotta” (“architecture interrupted”): having seen the results, and having considered the premises of the exhibition, it seems quite clear that the “interruption” does not refer to the object (Rome) as much as to the material being projected (architecture).

Architecture is an historical instrument for that part of reality which can be translated into the taxonomy of space. With

regard to the reality which thus takes shape, the language of architecture is developed as a search for its own laws of autonomy: the stronger the *order* is over reality, the severer appears the program of power which develops in this language; or, on the other hand, the more abstract the relationship between the program of power and the form of reality, the greater possibility there is for the language to search for its own autonomy, to appear or show itself to be independent.³ Between absolute constriction and absolute uprootedness, between these two opposite poles the main innovatory phases of the work of architecture pass.⁴ To paraphrase an important page of Jaques Lacan, it might be said that contemporary research or at least component details belonging to it, or at any rate to the tendencies displayed in the "Roma interrotta" exhibition, remind us that architecture "even at the very end of its rope maintains its value as an essential part of the mosaic. Even if it communicates no message, it represents the existence of communication; even if it be destined to deceive, it speculates on the good faith of the evidence."⁵ This condition, typical also of the actual state of architectural work, or rather of some of its "pathological" components, makes *regression* possible, "which is nothing but an actualization within the discourse of phantasmic relationships which are returned by an *ego* at each stage of the decomposition of the structure."⁶ The placing of architecture, particularly of its language, within the fracture between *organism* and *reality* "generates the ceaseless squaring of the inventories of the 'I' and causes it to appear as a *body-in-pieces* "in the form of cut-off limbs and organs reproduced externally, which take on wings and arm themselves for intestinal persecutions."⁷

This fracture can be seen with even greater clarity when architectural design enters into a dialogue with history, when it accepts confrontation with it. This is true, paradoxically, even when the histor-

ical object is taken to be fully available, completely transformable. In this case, the taking of Nolli's plan as a starting point, while it insures the harmlessness of the confrontation, renders the dialogue with historic Rome *apparent*; the seriousness of the game that follows is impugned by its initial mystification, seeming to make practicable an autonomous condition for architectural language, as it dances in front of a mirror mercilessly reflecting its own decomposition. Architecture comes to find itself in an oneiric condition, which allows it the greatest freedom, in deciding the rules of the game, to show itself either in the fullness of its own ideological vocation, or, at the other extreme, in an apparent indifference toward its own language—in fact, as Carlo Giulio Argan has shrewdly observed, to prove its own ability in "a series of gymnastic exercises of Imagination on the parallel bars of Memory."⁸

But in this case not all the exercises attempted brought tangible benefits to the body of the acrobat. The specific gravities of the results exhibited are too different one from another. The reactions that can be registered in the perfect luminosity of the mirror on which the projects are reflected are too discordant. The spirit of the game has been understood only by a few. Only a few projects have accepted the necessity to construct themselves as archaeology or "inventories" of their own language, to display themselves with "sincerity."

But in order to isolate the various attitudes of our planners, it is better to examine their architectural proposals in detail. Paolo Portoghesi is the only one who, at least in the planning stage, seems to want to keep to a literal interpretation of the title of the exhibition: he writes, "Rome can be considered an interrupted city if we reflect on the fact that after having undergone an organic process of growth and contraction for centuries while maintaining its essential coherence,

it was then swallowed up within an alien body that surrounded and suffocated it."⁹ His project follows from this affirmation (fig. 3). His constructions are intended to restore images of a lost natural organicism of urban form, borrowing their morphology from the most dramatic aspects of nature and the Roman landscape. An inferred and mysterious city emerges, an exuberant and often redundant construction which takes on suggestions of the most diverse nature and from which it is not easy to extract any idea of order, even merely as regards idiom. Antoine Grumbach follows a path which is only apparently different (fig. 4). In actual fact he too pursues a lost continuity: his inverse archaeology "is a search for a unity of urban form which the historical development of Rome has canceled; only fleeting traces of it remain, to be detected only in minor episodes and in problematic suggestions whose sole continuity is the fragile network of their "vegetation references."¹⁰ Robert Venturi, on the other hand, moves in a quite different territory (fig. 5). The Rome Nolli describes is for him like the maps in a tourist guide. What stands out in his photomontage is the technique used for the complete liberation of fantasy. The result is repetitive—repetitive as regards the technique employed, but also as regards the bravura to which his pop poetics and his ironic "Americanism" have accustomed us for so long: his Rome clasps hands warmly with Las Vegas.

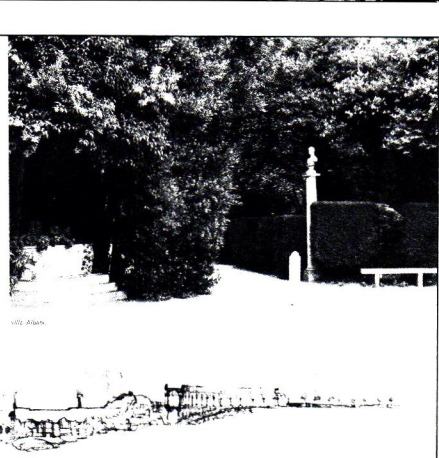
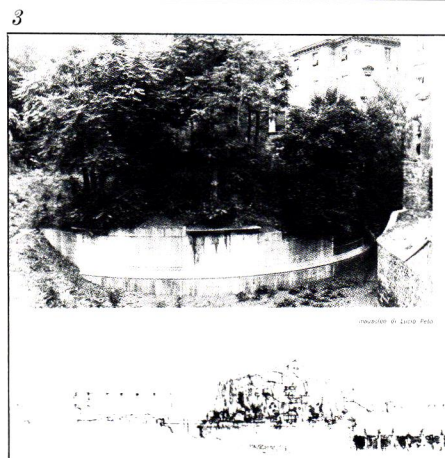
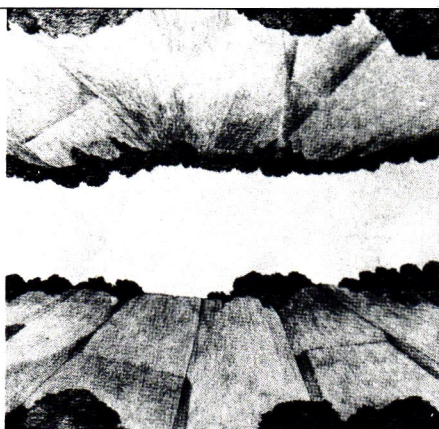
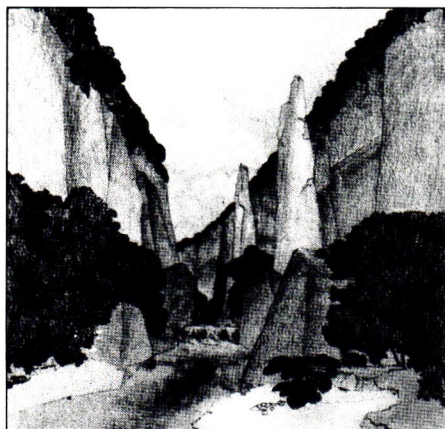
There are very different ways to judge by the results, of facing the confrontation with such an important theme and of posing the question about the relationship between history and design, but ways which have in common—particularly in the first two cases—a certain optimism. History, translated into metaphorical form or ransacked analytically, seems to bring back sense and motivation to the decomposed nature of architecture. Obviously the instruments and the idioms used are quite different inasmuch as the

3 Paolo Portoghesi and Vittorio Gagliotti, Rome. Analogies between the physical and urban environments. Left, view of a gorge near Barbarano, Lazio, compared with the Via di Panico, Rome. Right, view of a gorge near Pitigliano, Lazio, compared with a foreshortened view from ground level of the Via Propaganda Fide, Rome.

4 Antoine Grumbach, Paris. Left, the Mausoleum of Lucio Peto in the Via Salaria. Right, the nearby Villa Albani.

5 Robert Venturi and John Rauch, Philadelphia. From Rome to Las Vegas. Collage of a collage.

6 Romaldo Giurgola, New York. Sketches showing the park, the Servian Aggere, the workshops, and the community building.



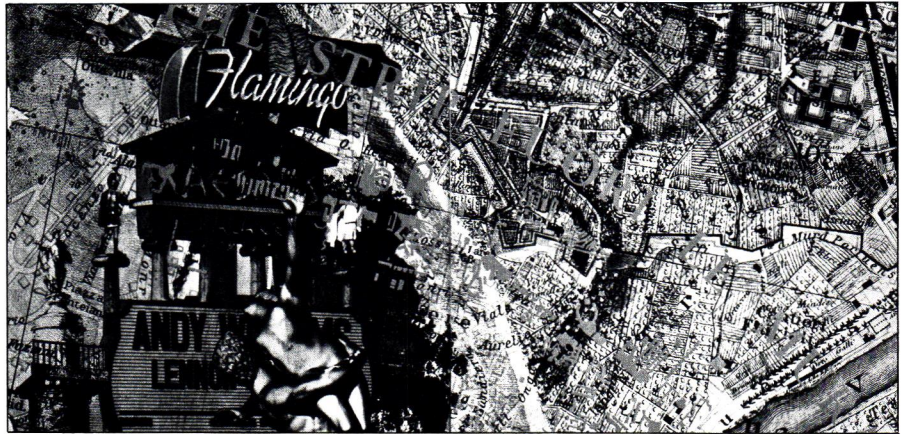
projects appear more or less ingenious or more or less serious. In some cases the architectural proposals pursue a fictitiously practical quality, almost professional in character, as in Romaldo Giurgola's project (fig. 6), or "provocative" in a literary manner, as in that of Nino Dardi, which is, however, obscure and cryptographic (fig. 7). Other architects aim at an oneiric suggestiveness whose consistency is hardly comprehensible, as the disappointing drawings of Robert Krier show (fig. 8), or the rather superficial historicism of Michael Graves whose "poetics of the fragment" can, in certain respects, approach that of Grumbach (fig. 9). Generally speaking, many of the projects displayed in the exhibition give rise to the suspicion that the architects have been forced to adopt cultural models which are too challenging for them, almost as if this "Roman outing" had become the occasion for reliving the strong emotions and fascinating adventures of the great European travelers of the nineteenth century. It is no coincidence that in the texts which the architects themselves have prepared for the catalogue to the exhibition we find references to Goethe and to the Nazarenes. Naturally these are "indecent" comparisons: how can the graphic "notes" of Grumbach be compared with the delightful pen-and-ink drawings of Goethe? Between these rather false exercises and the adventures of classical culture lies a great abyss. Nor, for that matter, have other projects or other interpretations managed to revive or interpret the spirit with which the best pupils of the Ecole des Beaux Arts approached the study of classical antiquity during their stay at Villa Medici: examining many of the projects displayed in the exhibition, we are aware of a real nostalgia—and it would also seem to be shared by some of the architects themselves—for the very careful observations and the extremely elegant reconstructions of the students of the Ecole. In our case, the "failed diaries" become a pendant to the superficial archaeology and improba-

7 Constantino Dardi, Rome. Seven proposals for the area surrounding the Tridente. Left, plan showing the Mausoleo di Augusto and the Ripetta embankment. Right, plan showing the Piazza del Popolo and the Tridente.

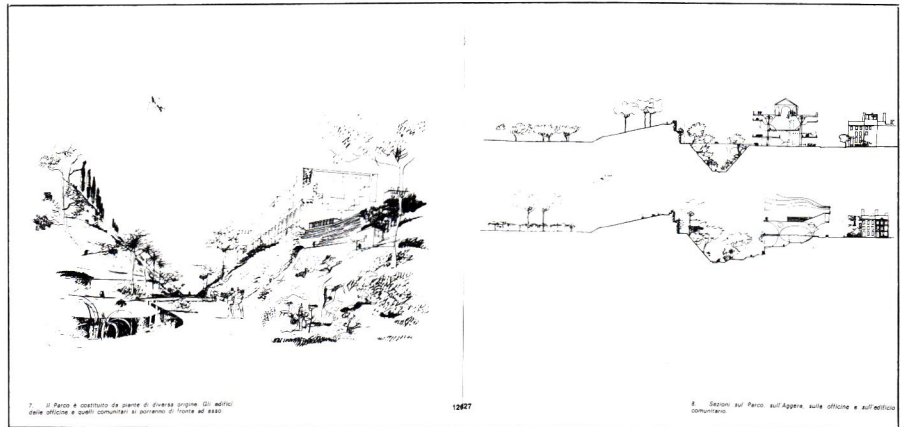
ble utopias. The lacking archaeology forms, in fact, the complementary pole of a clumsily provocative utopistic attitude, which, in the project for the “Phalanx of Rome,” stridently couples the text of Fourier with the collage of Piero Sartogo (fig. 10); in “montage” of this kind the desire to astonish reaches the point of farce.

Among so many peregrinations without credible goals, only one project has attempted to play the game the whole way, imposing strict rules on itself for this purpose, even though the necessity to do so was felt by other architects as well.¹¹

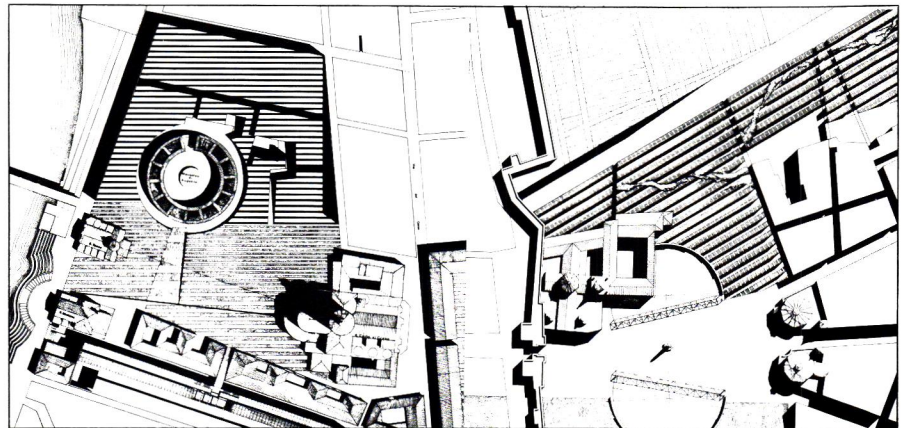
Colin Rowe confronted Nolli’s plan by attempting systematically to cancel out all the divisions between the present of his project and the historic past of the object to be transformed, fully accepting the revelation of the impossibility of his own procedure. He thus assumes an attitude which is fundamentally archaeological. The subject does not seem to suggest anything “modern” to him; he does not give us a project but rather a *restitution* (fig. 11). In this sense, his proposals do not suffer from any of the nostalgia which disturbs the projects which have been mentioned above. What Nolli represented is considered as evidence to be investigated; and around it Rowe organizes an archaeological dig. But what is the spirit of this archaeology? The careful, elegant plans of Rowe reveal a positivist inclination, showing how archaeology is conceived as “reconstruction,” completion, refusal of any romantic yielding to the fascination of ruins—which can frequently be glimpsed between the lines of the other projects. Rowe seems to move about in the midst of the classical ruins fraught with the same anxiety which inspired the Anglo-Saxon archaeologists of the nineteenth century when faced with the “impenetrability” and incompleteness of their discoveries. His intellectual attitude is similar both to that of the “reconstructors” of the palace at Knossos and the Stoa of Attalo



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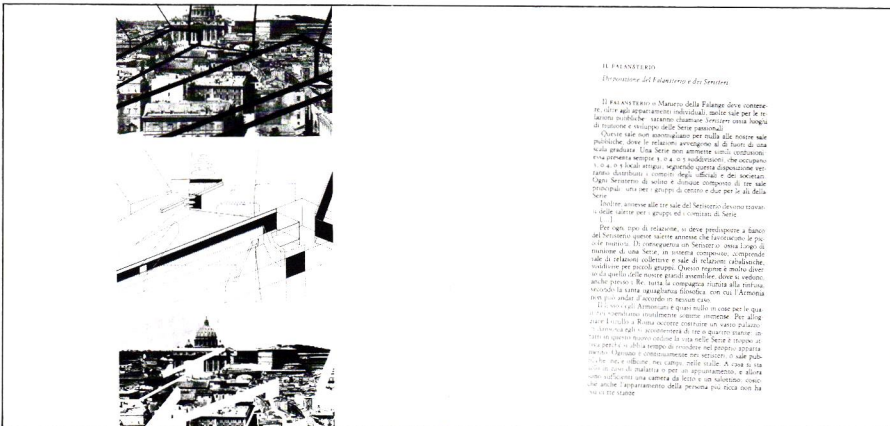
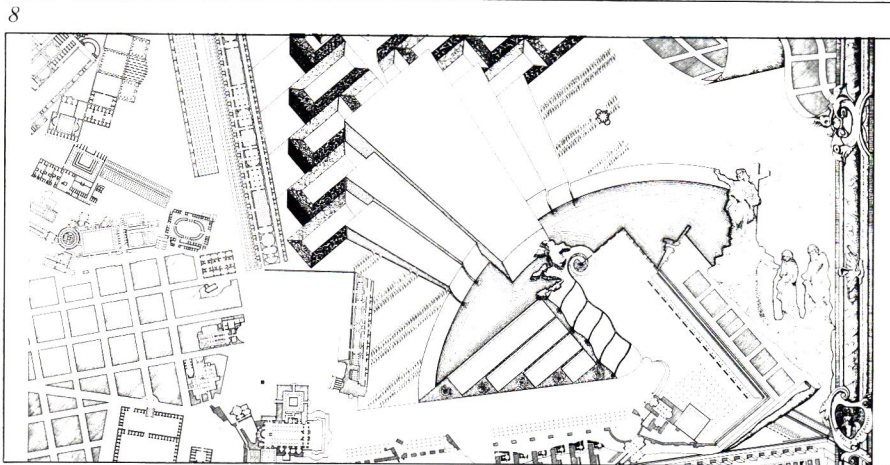
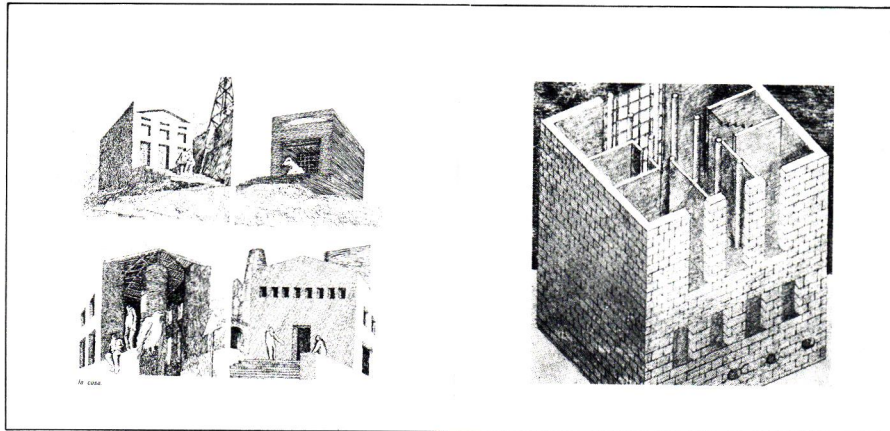


7

8 Robert Krier, Vienna. "La Casa."

9 Michael Graves, Princeton. Porta Maggiore. "As Villa Madama in its present fragmentary state asks us to remember a more complete order, so also the city in its built state can engage us to make completions through our cultural memory."

10 Piero Sartogo, Rome. The Roman Phalanx realizing Phalansterian harmony and occupying the north west sector just behind the river in the area around the Mausoleo di Adriano, the Valle dell'Inferno, and the Fornaci. Left, the transformation of the area near St. Peter's using arcades. Right, a page from Charles Fourier, *Théorie de quatre mouvements*, 1808.



and to that of the Prix de Rome architects. The ruins give rise to a classical city in whose forms fantasy and archaeology are inextricably mixed; the fragment is put in its place in an ahistorical continuum, rigorously represented in severely detailed plans with a precision hardly ever seen nowadays.

If Rowe adapts himself completely to this abstract game, revealing his conception of "a relationship with history" which is regret without nostalgia, Leon Krier, with particular sensibility for the superfluous, seems to put his money mainly on irony (fig. 12). It is a different kind of irony from that repeated rather too often by Venturi, but is equally egocentric in emphasizing the spectacular quality of the techniques used for representation. The insistence with which Krier pursues a kind of "return" from the project to the drawing almost neurotically implies the limits of an idiom which, in the weakness of its meanings, tends more and more to reflect itself. The large, unadorned constructions imagined by Leon Krier aim at producing traumatic effects against the natural background of Roman monuments, the organic sedimentation which they are intended to interrupt. His "anti-pretty" poetics play ambiguously on the use of the refined or useless graphic detail and make constant use of "out of scale" images, while indirectly declaring their own ineffectuality through the almost allegorical character of the proposed transformation of Rome, as in the case of the solution devised for Piazza San Pietro, imagined as an enormous pool in an unexpected surrender to neo-Futurist poetics.

Some of the salient features that characterize the intellectual approaches of Rowe and Leon Krier are also to be found combined in Aldo Rossi's project (fig. 13). He affirms his own extraneousness both to the city and indirectly to the suggestions offered by Nolli, writing in the catalogue: "This project does not concern some hy-

11 Peter Carl, Judith di Maio, Steven Peterson, Colin Rowe, U.S.A. Nolli:
Eighth sector. Axonometric view
showing the Aventino Hill and the
Botanical Gardens.

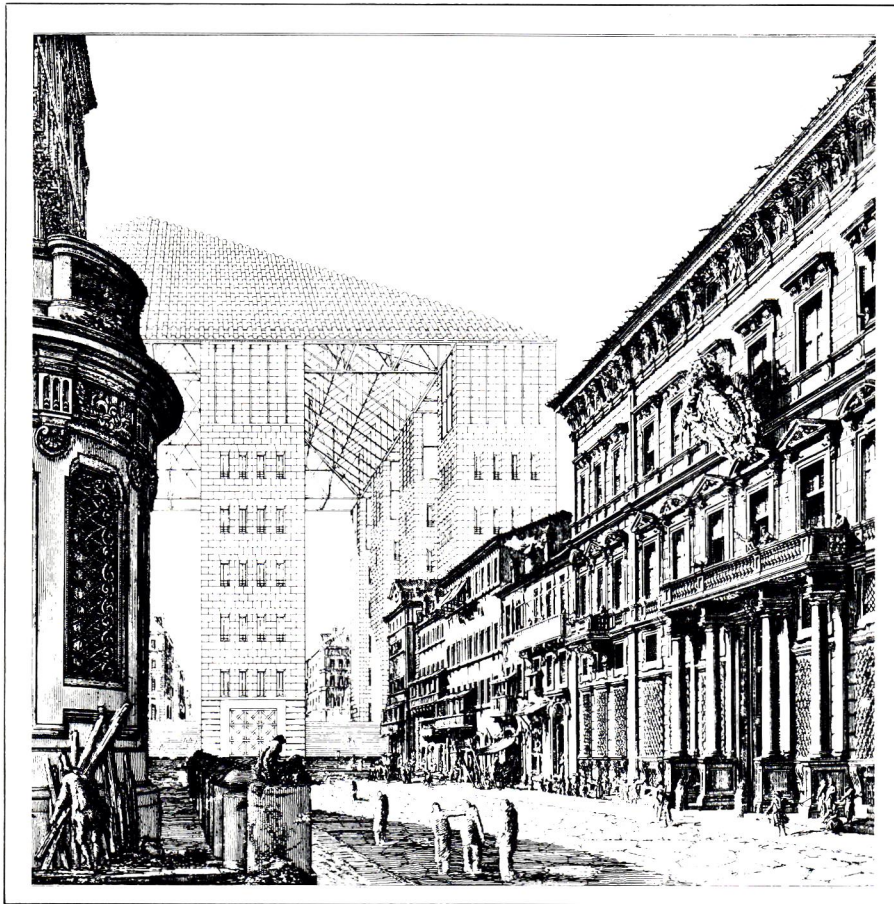
pothetical alternative to the growth of the city, and is indifferent to relations with the city—in particular with the city of Rome, or *Roma interrotta*.”¹² The relationship with history that is probed in such complicated ways in many of the other projects displayed by Rossi is reduced to a way of rendering obvious—*parlante* it might be said, bearing other projects of his in mind—the intimations and annotations of memory. These intimations are manifold and extremely different from one another: “the most positive examples I went back to,” affirms Rossi, “are those of the reconstructions of the great Prix de Rome architects and the romantic archaeological school of the French and Germans, as well as the images of Cecil B. De Mille and other Hollywood directors and Fellini’s *Satyricon*, images which are a basic part of our artistic education.”¹³

Whatever the evident results of such multifariousness, this project of Rossi’s is animated above all by a strong desire to reveal itself; it is an architecture that wants to show itself off, one that uses design to relate the formation of idiom emphasizing the appearance of form, but with the aim of concentrating the whole of our attention on the originality and autonomy of this process. Rossi’s proposal stresses the archaeological theme—a complex of baths punctuated by repeated and recurrent images—as in his other projects repeated confirmation of that obstinateness which characterizes his work, as Vittorio Savi has shown so brilliantly.¹⁴ Rossi’s activity finds an apt comment in the words of Lacan which have already been quoted, in which the French scholar maintains that all forms which are defined and which once defined remain obstinately the same show the presence of phantasmic relationships which constitute “the inventory of the ‘I.’” Repetition is, then, one of the characteristics of this project of Rossi’s; there is an “introspective memory” which forms the subtle thread that holds together the decomposition of the



l'Aventino e l'Orto Botanico.

11



12 Leon Krier. London. *The new district centers.* “The covered piazza at the intersection of Via Condotti and the Via del Corso would contain an airline terminal, and each pillar would support a huge clock showing local time of all the principal cities of the world The huge glass elements would be lit up at night to appear as moons in the semi-darkness of the piazza.

projected structure and from which blossom, solitarily, new forms destined to acquire relative autonomy and thus to definitively become part of Rossi’s poetic repertoire. In the case of this latest project, there is a new sign dreamily being developed—the delightful design for the *casa del tè* (“tea-house”).

The project of James Stirling (fig. 14) carries self-narration to an extreme. It is not composed of the elegant lines used by Rossi, but can be placed, rather, in the class of the *inventory*: it is a not particularly original piece of sleight-of-hand, a montage, following the indications of the Nolli plan, of all the other works of Stirling, who, without false modesty, affirms “megalomania is a privilege of a minority of the elect. Piranesi who drew up his plan in 1762 was undoubtedly a Megalomaniacal Frustrated Architect (MFA), as also were Boullée, Vanbrugh, Soane, Sant’ Elia, Le Corbusier, etc., and it is in this noble company of MFAs that we put forward our proposal.”¹⁵ On a more modest level, his present project recalls to mind both the architectural montage presented by Aymonino and his group at the Milan Triennale of 1973, and that of the “analogous city” designed by Rossi and Arduino Cantafora, without possessing its poetic vein. Stirling simply ends up by giving us an anthology of himself, but despite his evident efforts, he does not manage to deduce an organically delineated path. What he ends up designing is his own multiplicity—and admiring his own image reflected in it. His is a trick parallel to that proposed by the exhibition. It is a double operation of “de-contextualization”: the one carried out with regard to Nolli’s plan, and the other carried out on the body of his own work, rather sadistically perhaps but one which makes a contribution to the clarity of the results—the image of the evident dispensability and indifference of architecture.

Rossi and Stirling accept the rules of this game only to break them, as in part does

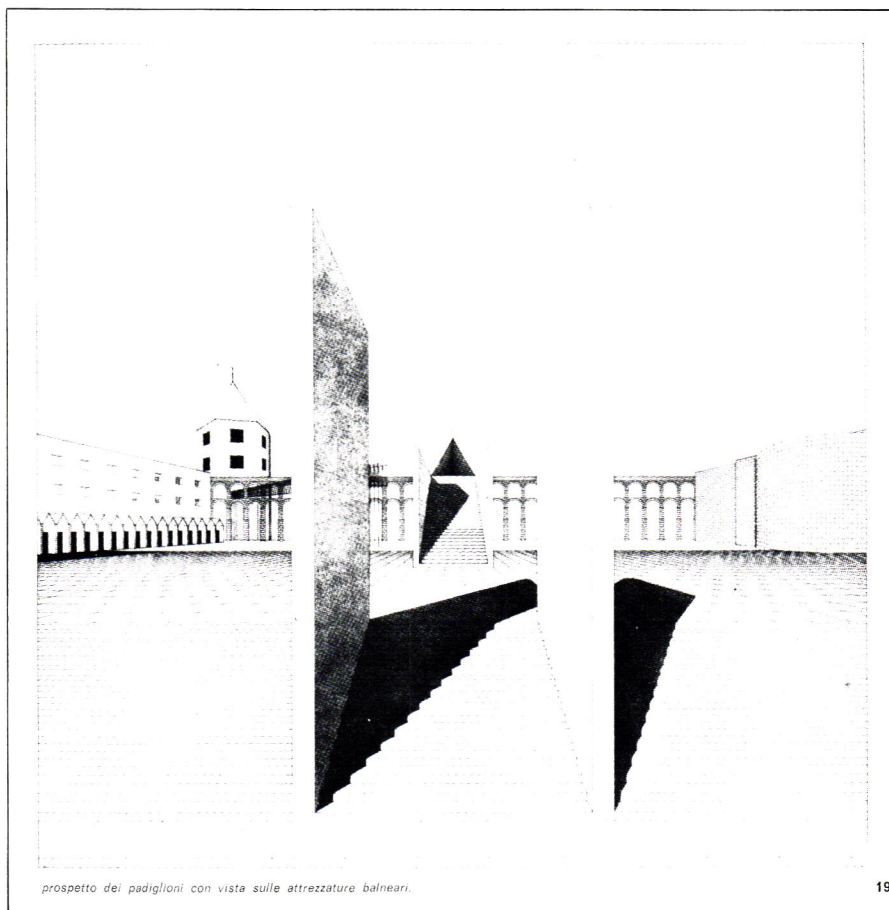
Venturi. But even a game, if the rules are not kept, becomes an intransigent revelation of sources that are too deep not to exert a paralyzing influence (Venturi), or of an uprootedness, diversity, and limitation to projects which seem to be prohibited from returning to the natural law of organisms (Stirling and Rossi). But the fantasies of Rossi and Stirling, their drawings that are meant to state the formation of architectural forms, tend to make a fetish of their projects. It is therefore appropriate that as fetishes, the area preferred for them is that of the exhibition—a place in which the relationship between the public and architecture becomes dominantly fetishist. Giorgio Agamben has written, most aptly, that “a fetish, whether it be a part of the body or an inorganic object, is, at one and the same time, the presence of that nothing that is the maternal penis, and the signal of its absence; the symbol of something and, at the same time, of its negation, it can be maintained only at the price of an essential laceration, in which the two opposing reactions form the nucleus of a true fracture of the ‘I’ [*Ichspaltung*]”¹⁶—of the *body in fragments* of architecture we might say (or of anyone who still feels obliged to play with it).

Notes

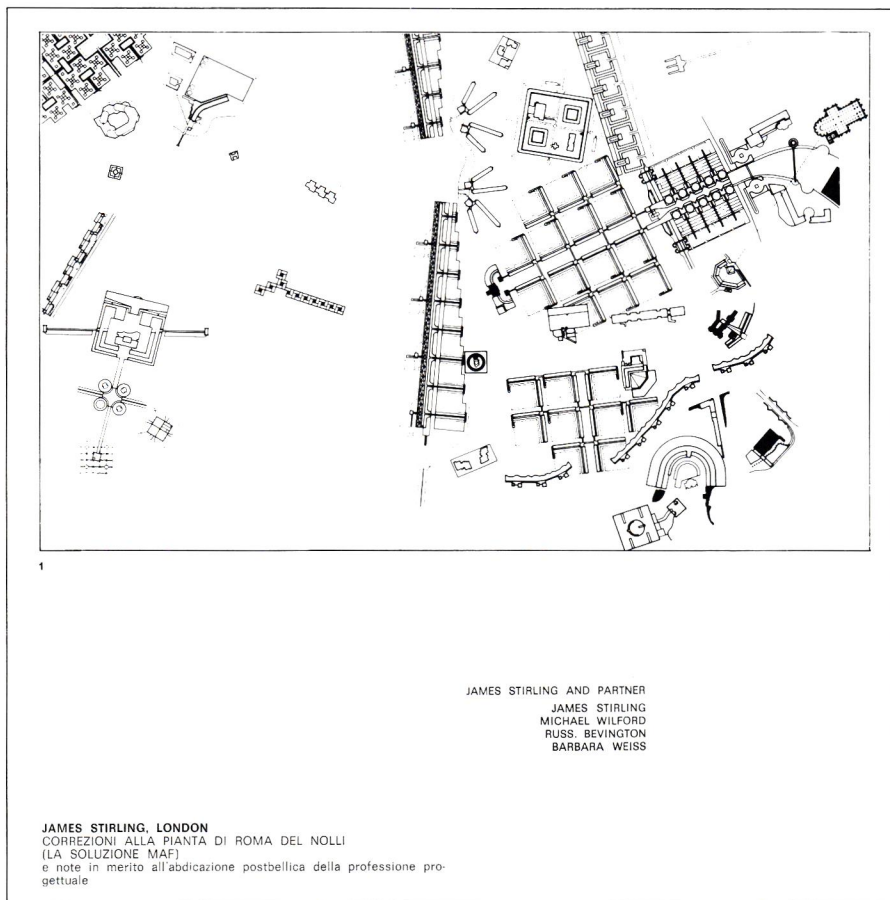
This review was originally published in Japanese in A+U, October 1978, and is published here in English with the kind permission of Mr. Toshio Nakamura of the A+U Publishing Co. Ltd.

1. In recent times many debates and polemics have arisen about contemporary Rome and its urbanistic development and about the “evils which afflict the city.” In the past, various architectural competitions have been the occasion of violent clashes; we need mention only the story of the competition for the building of new offices for the House of Deputies in 1966—a story which has not yet been concluded (cf. M. Tafuri, *Il Concorso per i nuovi uffici della Camera dei Deputati* [Rome, 1968]). The cultural attitude we refer to in these pages is exemplified in a typical way in the book by Italo Insolera, *Roma moderna* (Turin, 1962).

2. In all his writings Benevolo shows himself to be consistent with the principles set out in



13 Aldo Rossi, Milan. Project: the reconstruction of the Terme Antoniane and the old aquaduct with the most modern heating/cooling systems for the use of the new bathing facilities for pleasure, love, and gymnastics, with auxiliary pavilions for fairs and markets. Perspective of the pavilions with the bathing facilities in the background.



14 James Stirling, London. Corrections to Nolli's plan (Solution MFA). Plan showing formal elements of the project.

the volume *Roma, da ieri a domani* (Bari, 1971). Regarding the possible parallelism mentioned here between the proposals of Benevolo and the "Roma interrotta" exhibition see the chart on page 158 showing a montage over a built-up section of the periphery of Rome of the plan of the residential complex designed by Bakema and van den Broek in Noord Kennemerland in 1959.

3. I have already made a preliminary attempt to illustrate this modern condition of architectural work, together with M. Tafuri in the last chapter of our *Architettura Contemporanea* (Milan, 1966). If these arguments are extended to the problem of the relations between architectural idiom and technical development, the fundamental analyses of Martin Heidegger should be borne in mind (*Unterwegs zur Sache* [Pfullingen, 1959], and *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [Pfullingen, 1954]). I have tried to develop this same theme in the opening part of my essay "Critica e Progetto," which is to appear in *Oppositions 13*.

4. Essential in this matter is M. Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir. Naissance de la Prison* (Paris, 1975), in particular the essay on panoptism.

5. J. Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris, 1966).

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

8. G. C. Argan in his introduction to the catalogue *Roma interrotta* (Rome, 1978), p. 12.

9. P. Portoghesi and colleagues, *Roma interrotta*, p. 100.

10. A. Grumbach, "L'architecture au défi," *Roma interrotta*, p. 67.

11. E.g., C. Dardi, "Sette interventi intorno al Tridente," *Roma interrotta*, p. 58, writes, "however, the dimension of the game will be true and complete only if we decide to declare beforehand what the rules, the norms, and the exceptions to it really are."

12. A. Rossi, "Progetto: Ricostruzione delle Terme Antoniane . . .," *Roma interrotta*, p. 184.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

14. The theme of "obstinateness" as a characteristic of the projects of Rossi is dealt with repeatedly by V. Savi in his interesting essay *L'architettura di Aldo Rossi* (Milan, 1976). I have discussed the same matter, also with regard to Savi's analysis, in the final part of my essay "Critica e Progetto," cited above.

15. J. Stirling, "Correzioni alla pianta di Roma del Nolli (la soluzione MAF)," *Roma interrotta*, p. 83.

16. G. Agamben, *Stanze* (Turin, 1977), p. 40.

Figure Credits

1-8, 10-14 Reprinted from the catalogue *Roma interrotta* (Rome: Incontri Internazionali d'Arte e Officina Edizioni, 1978).

9 Courtesy Michael Graves.

Alan Colquhoun

*Alan Colquhoun was born in England in 1921. He received his degree in architecture from the Architectural Association, London, in 1949. He has taught at the Architectural Association, London (1957–1964), Cornell University, Ithaca, New York (1968, 1971), University College, Dublin (1972–1973), The Polytechnic of Central London (1974, 1976), l'École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (1977), and Princeton University, New Jersey (1966, 1968–1970, 1978). His published work includes: "The Modern Movement in Architecture," British Journal of Aesthetics, January 1962; "Symbolic and Literal Aspects of Technology," Architectural Design, November 1962; "Formal and Functional Interactions—a study of two late projects by Le Corbusier," Architectural Design, May 1966; *ibid.*, Le Corbusier in Perspective (New York: Prentice Hall, 1974); "Typology and Design Method," Arena, June 1967; *ibid.*, Meaning in Architecture, G. Baird and C. Jencks, eds. (London: Barrie & Rochclift, 1969); "Historicism and the Limits of Semiology," Op Cit., 1972; "Displacement of Concepts," Architectural Design, February 1972; "Ideal Structures," Times Literary Supplement, February 1973; "Alvar Aalto," L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1976; "Rational Architecture," Architectural Design, 1975; "From Bricolage to Myth, or how to put Humpty-Dumpty together again," Oppositions, 12, Spring 1978; "Form and Figure," Oppositions, 12, Spring 1978; "Sign and Substance: Reflections on Complexity, Las Vegas, and Oberlin," Oppositions (to be published); Arquitectura moderna y cambio histórico ("Meaning and Change in Architecture," book to be published by Gigli, Barcelona). He is a principal in the firm Colquhoun & Miller, Architects.*

Francesco Dal Co

Francesco Dal Co was born in Ferrara, Italy, in 1945. He graduated in architecture in 1970 from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia where he is presently a professor of the History of Architecture. He has also lectured extensively in Europe and America. From 1974–1976 he was a member of the Commission for Architecture and Visual Arts of the Biennale di Venezia and organized an exhibition "Cinema, città, avanguardia" for the 1974 Biennale. He was also the author of the two catalogues of this exhibition. His published work includes: Hannes Meyer, Scritti, 1921–1942, Francesco Dal Co, editor (Venice/Padua: Marsilio, 1969); De la vanguardia a la metropoli (in collaboration with M. Cacciari and M. Tafuri [Barcelona: Gili, 1972]); La città americana dalla guerra civile al New Deal (in collaboration with others [Bari: Laterza, 1973]); Architettura contemporanea (with M. Tafuri [Milan: Electa, 1976]). He is presently working on two books, one on the works of recent outstanding architects, and the other a collection of essays on architectural culture in America.

Peter Eisenman

Peter Eisenman is an architect and Director of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York City. He has taught at the University of Cambridge, Princeton University, and at present at the Cooper Union. In addition to a series of single family houses which he has designed and built, he has worked on several urban design and public housing projects. He was one of eleven architects who represented the United States at the 1976 Venice Biennale. Most recently he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for a study of post-functionalism. Two of his books will appear later this year: Giuseppe Terragni (The MIT Press); and Houses of Cards (Oxford University Press).

Kenneth Frampton

Kenneth Frampton was born in England in 1930. He is a Fellow of The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York, and a member of the Faculty at the GSAP, Columbia University, New York. From 1959 to 1965 he was an associate of Douglas Stephen and Partners, London. From 1962 to 1965 he was technical editor of the journal, Architectural Design and from 1966 until 1972 he was a member of the faculty of Princeton University. He has worked as an architect in England, Israel, and the United States. The low-rise housing prototype on which he worked with U.D.C. architects was completed in 1976 as the Marcus Garvey Park Village, Brownsville, Brooklyn, and is now fully occupied. He is the author of A Critical History of Modern Architecture (to be published in 1979 by the Oxford University Press).

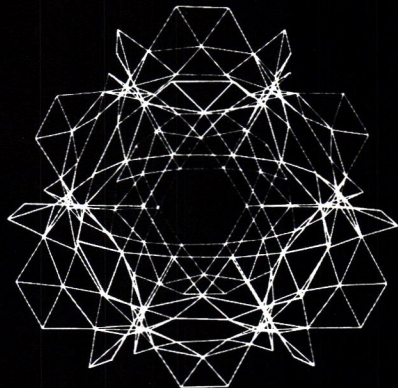
Sergio Polano

Sergio Polano was born on January 24, 1950. He graduated from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia in 1974. He is presently an assistant there in the Dipartimento di Critica e Analisi Storica. He has published in L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, Lotus, and Plan. He is the editor of a book of the complete writings and works of Theo van Doesburg (to be published in 1979).

Ellen R. Shapiro

Ellen R. Shapiro received a B.A. in classics from Brandeis University, and her M.A. degree in the history of art from Yale University (1976) with her master's thesis on "La Casa del Fascio di Como and the Fascist Aesthetic." In 1977 she was awarded a Fulbright-Hays fellowship for study in Italy. She is currently a fellow at the American Academy in Rome where she is completing her Ph.D. dissertation on Fascist building programs.

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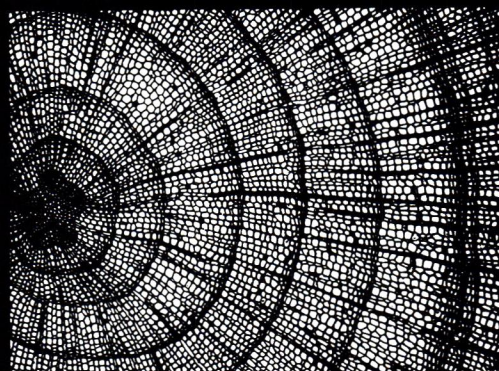
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Pearce's work follows in the tradition established by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson and Konrad Wachsmann, and reflects his earlier close working association with Charles Eames and Buckminster Fuller.

Pleine main j'ai reçu
pleine main je donne.

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Among the contributors are Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, Paul Turner, Mary Patricia May Sekler, Charles Jencks, Stanislaus von Moos, and Anthony Sutcliffe.

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Charles Jencks wrote in *Modern Movements in Architecture* (1973): "... when Colin Rowe published his article 'The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa' in 1947, those who had been following the emergent Neo-Platonism were not surprised. Here was New Palladianism fully born right from the top of Corbusier's head."

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