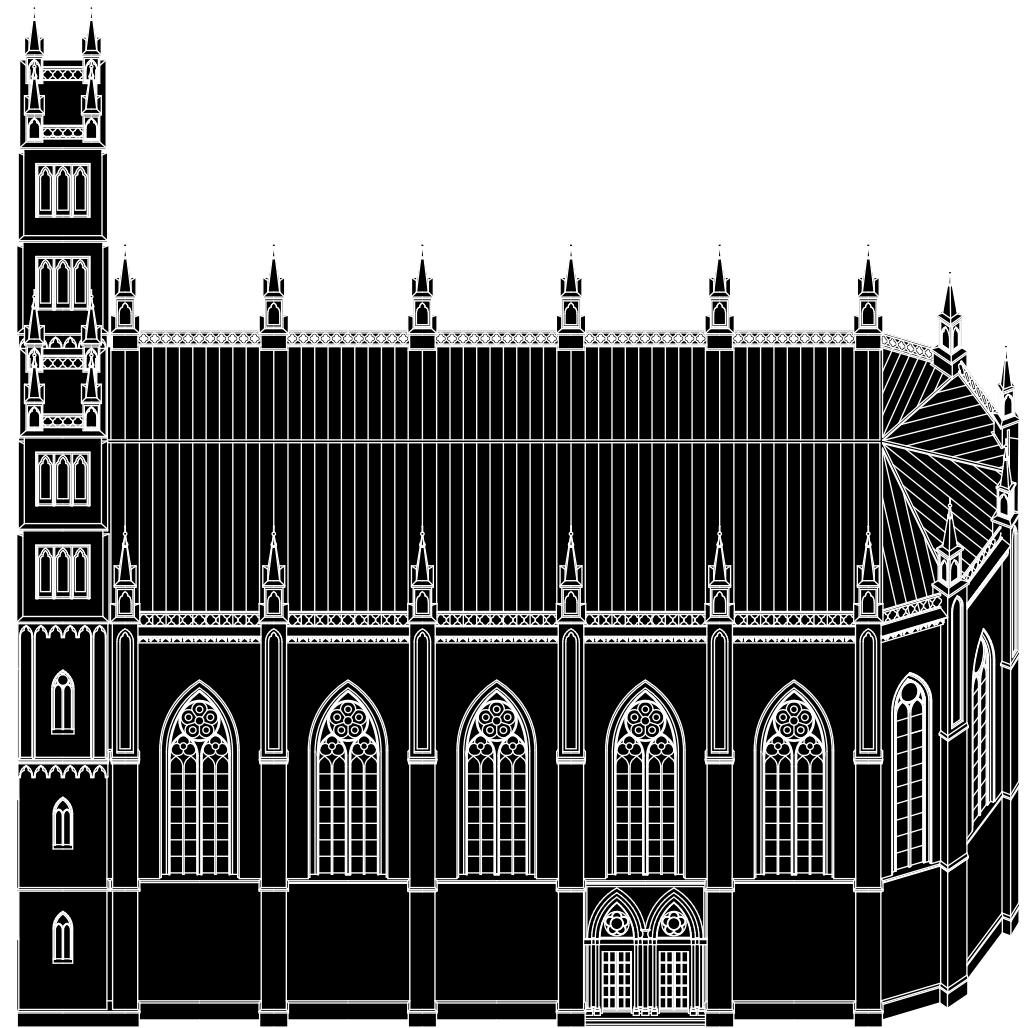


SAN ROCCO • INDIFFERENCE Martin Abbot on New Delhi / Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Giudici on the La Tourette monastery / Ido Avissar on hashish and the city / Campomarzio on a replica by Antonio di Sangallo / Ludovico Centis on Pouillon / Victoria Easton on SOM / Jose Manuel López Ujaque interviews Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal / Fabrizio Gallanti on the world's top international design firms / Francesco Garofalo on Angiolo Mazzoni / Kersten Geers on Álvaro Siza / Matteo Ghidoni on Willis Faber and Dumas / Francesco Marullo on Leonidov / Matteo Palamini and Pietro Pezzani on Lacaton and Vassal / Jelena Pancevac on the Resor House / Freek Persyn and Ido Avissar on OMU and OMA / Giovanni Piovene on Aymar Embury II / Vittorio Pizzigoni on Mies in the U.S. / Irénée Scalbert on the Escorial / Giacomo Summa in conversation with Janez Gorišek / Pier Paolo Tamburelli on the Gothic / Guido Tesio on Loos / Oliver Thill on Richard Meier / Stefaan Vervoort on Luc Deleu / Cino Zucchi on the glass house / With photos by Teresa Cos, Giovanna Silva and Alberto Sinigaglia and a drawing by Charlotte Schmidt

SAN ROCCO - INDIFFERENCE

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EDITORIAL

Indifference is when you do not care or do not listen; it is when you avoid paying attention. Indifference is the art of ignoring, of forgetting, of sparing energy. Indifference is the bear's response to winter: go to sleep and skip it.

Indifference might seem easy or apathetic, but in reality it requires talent and precision. Indeed, like anything else, indifference cannot be universal, so it has to be selective. Indifference is a way of separating what matters from what does not, a way of protecting reason by avoiding suicidal missions: "For those seeking an explanation of all things, destroy explanation" (Theophrastus of Eresus, *Metaphysics*, VIII.5).

Indifference is editing. In architecture – as in any other activity – good work does not mean *caring about everything* (as primary school teachers and competition briefs would love to make us believe). Indifference is a strategic judgement, a way of singling out what Chairman Mao used to call "the principal aspect of contradiction" and of avoiding wasting energy on secondary issues. Indifference is a step toward quality: the less we care about, the easier the solution becomes; thus, the more indifference, the fewer mistakes. Indifference is about putting oneself in the position not to fail.

Indifference is an act of suspension. Indifference produces distance, and it creates a possible space for action. Indifference allows us – for a time – not to believe in the world. Indifference erases, cleans, purifies. Indifference creates the necessary conditions for starting the job.

Liberating us from the need to be good, indifference creates the space for understanding. Liberating us from the need to take sides,

indifference creates the possibility of paying attention. By immediately refusing to answer, indifference ends up creating the possibility of listening. Liberating us from the need to provide an immediate solution for an immediate need, indifference activates the generosity of form, producing spaces that, in the long term, will evolve beyond the initial intentions of their producers.

Indifference defines a precise attitude toward architecture – a rational one, one based on an unprejudiced questioning of its role. “What is architecture?” is a question that indifference addresses the other way around: “What is not architecture?” “What is irrelevant for architecture?” “What is better to forget?”

Indifference paves the way for abstraction. Indifference approaches intellectual work from a more remote position. Indifference looks at things from afar, with greater clarity and less involvement.

According to the dictionary, indifference is “the absence of compulsion to or toward one thing or another”. Indifference is liberating. No compulsion, no wasted effort, no obsessive point-by-point problem-solving. Indifference creates the space for thinking about architecture as an intellectual activity that goes beyond the craftsman’s obsession with control. Indifference is redemption from the compulsion to care (Client: “What is the colour of the doorhandle?” / Architect: “Whatever you like.” or “Anything is fine with me.” or “Pink. Do you like pink, too?”).

Indifference is the classicist answer to the oppressive arts-and-crafts atmosphere that polluted the architectural debate from Ruskin to Zumthor. Indifference is the difference between architects and craftsmen. Indifference means the freedom not to be obliged to exhibit our talent like sword-swallowers in a circus.

Indifference is somehow humble. It is a decrease in control (which is possible because important things have already been defined in advance and the rest doesn’t really matter). In this sense, less is not *more*: it is just *enough*.

Indifference is the difference between classicism and eclecticism. Indeed, classicism is just *stylistic indifference* in the end. For eclectic architects (e.g., Semper, Gilbert, Stern), styles are different; this is why they matter so much. For them, styles are *content* and immediately imply certain values. For classicist architects (Bramante, Schinkel, McKim), styles are *form*, and forms are all the same (form is simply good or bad). The use of the Gothic by Semper, Gilbert or Stern is totally different from that of Bramante, Schinkel or McKim. For the

former group, the use of the Gothic style immediately communicates *meaning*, while for the latter, it does not mean anything: it is just the application of one of many repertoires. Indifference provides the only possible answer to the stupidity – one that did not disappear in modernism and postmodernism – of the question posed by Eclecticism: “In which style should we build?” Indeed, indifference is the better way to express that, without question, all styles are the same. Indifference erases excuses: given that you do not care, then your work is obliged to be excellent.

No explanation will help (and it certainly does not help searching for explanations from the very beginning).

Indifference is clearly non-modern. Indifference does not take a position; it does not put a label on itself. Indifference has no slogans, anthems or flags. Indifference is as grey as Gerhard Richter’s monochromes. Indifference wears a bourgeois outfit just like Magritte’s dummies. Indifference does not follow the Manichean alternative of modernism: us (the good) against you (the evil). Indifference is a reaction to a world that is clearly mediocre and that is not continuously confronted with the alternatives of collapse and redemption.

Indifference is open-minded – no dogmas, no intolerance, no opposition; no avant-garde, no polemics.

Indifference, however, is not tolerance.

And indifference is not patience (Bramante, the master of indifference, was also the master of impatience).

Indifference is some sort of extreme sincerity: You know that we are not helping you, that we are not solving your problems. You know it, and we don’t care.

Indifference is irritating.

Indifference is commitment, the only kind.

Indeed, indifference only exists because we *do* care.