

CANON_{and}CODE

THE LANGUAGE OF ARTS IN TODAY'S WORLD

P R O C E E D I N G S



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Canon and code The language of arts in today's world

edited by

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Anna Irene Del Monaco | Francesco Menegatti
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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

DAY ONE | 30 june

PLENARY SESSION CANON AND CODE

*Opening Ceremony
and Introduction*

Orazio Carpenzano

Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome

Alessandra Capuano

Director of DIAP, Sapienza University of Rome

Keynote Speech

MANFREDI CATELLA

CEO & Founder COIMA

discussants

Alfonso Femia Atelier(s) Alfonso Femia

Pierluigi Morano Polytechnic of Bari

moderator

Anna Irene Del Monaco Sapienza University of Rome

Keynote Speech

JOSÉ FERNANDO DE CASTRO GONÇALVES

Architect and Professor of FCT, University of Coimbra

Keynote Speech

ELISA VALERO RAMOS

Architect and Professor of ETSA, University of Granada

discussants

Giovanni Leoni University of Bologna

Emanuele Fidone University of Catania

moderator

Dina Nencini Sapienza University of Rome

DAY TWO | 01 july

PARALLE TABLES

Introduction **Alessandra Capanna, Anna Irene Del Monaco, Dina Nencini** Sapienza University of Rome

PLENARY SESSION THE LANGUAGE OF ARTS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Round table **FRANCESCO CARERI** University of Roma Tre
CHERUBINO GAMBARDELLA University of Campania 'L. Vanvitelli'
VALERIO PAOLO MOSCO IUAV Venice
Orazio Carpenzano Sapienza University of Rome

moderator

CLOSING SESSION All Chairs of Parallel Tables

DAY THREE | 08 july

PLENARY SESSION ICONA BOOK EVENT

moderator **Anna Irene Del Monaco** Sapienza University of Rome

Keynote speaker **XING RUAN** Shanghai Jiao Tong University
presentation of the book ***Confucius' Courtyard. Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China***
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021

discussants **Lucio V. Barbera** Sapienza University of Rome
Domenico Chizzoniti Polytechnic of Milan

Keynote speaker **Gianluca Peluffo** University of Enna 'Kore'
presentation of the book ***Il giuramento di Pan***, Marsilio, 2020
discussants **Orazio Carpenzano** Sapienza University of Rome
Dina Nencini Sapienza University of Rome

Keynote speaker **Reinhold Martin** Columbia University of New York
presentation of the book ***Knowledge Worlds: Media, Materiality, and the Making of the Modern University***
Columbia University Press, 2021

discussants **Antonino Saggio** Sapienza University of Rome
Francesco Menegatti Polytechnic of Milan

INDEX

10 **Opening**

Canon and Code. The language of the arts in today's world. Reflections between consolidated readings and new dimensions, *Orazio Carpenzano*

Prophecies in the Present. Technology, Continuum, Climate in the Public Spaces of Extreme Cities
Anna Irene Del Monaco

Canon, document and classification.
Dina Nencini

36 **Keynote Speeches**

Manfredi Catella,
Canon and Code, Round Table, *Alfonso Femia, Pierluigi Morano, Anna Irene Del Monaco*
José Fernando de Castro Gonçalves,
Elisa Valero Ramos
Canon and Code, Round Table, *Giovanni Leoni,*
Emanuele Fidone, Dina Nencini

64 **Plenary Session**

The Language of arts in Today's World
Orazio Carpenzano, Francesco Careri,
Cherubino Gambardella, Valerio Paolo Mosco

76 **Book Events**

Book Event. *Confucius' Courtyard. Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, Bloomberg, London 2021.

Xing Ruan, Lucio Valerio Barbera, Domenico Chizzoniti, Anna Irene Del Monaco

Book Event. *Il giuramento di Pan*, Marsilio, 2020
Gianluca Peluffo, Orazio Carpenzano, Dina Nencini

Book Event. *Knowledge Worlds: Media, Materiality, and the Making of the Modern University*, Columbia University Press, 2021.

A presentation by *Francesco Menegatti*
Dialogues: *Reinhold Martin, Antonino Saggio,*

102 **Full papers**

Introduction
Eight short notes on the parallel tables

Track A
Genealogy/Poetic

Track B
Metamorphosis/Actions

Track C
Multiplicity/Communication

introduction

Eight short notes on the parallel tables

Francesca Addario, Fabio Balducci, Federica Conte, Andrea D'Urzo, Tommaso Lolli, Enrico Marani, Paolo Marcoaldi, Luigi Savio Margagliotta, Alice Monacelli, Alessandro Oltremarini, Michele Pellino, Thomas Pedrazzini, Giorgio Quintiliani, Matteo Saldarini, Andrea Siciliani

TRACK A genealogy / poetic

Canon and code in architecture of Giorgio Grassi.
Attempts of orientation in the epoch of arbitrariness
Francesca Addario

118

Euclidean rescue
Luigi Arcopinto

126

Alice in Wonderland:
"Art exists because reality is neither real nor significant"
Francesca Belloni

132

Compositional languages and expression codes
in the era of environmental sustainability.
Towards the refounding of a theory of architecture
Alberto Bologna

140

Fashion and media architecture.
An investigation into new paradigms and new urban (sound)
spaces for the design of contemporary cultural systems
Alessandra Capanna

148

The creative process as a synthesis of dual aspects

of making architecture
Alessandra Como, Luisa Smeragliuolo Perrotta

156

The face of a land. Morandi, Bertolucci, Ghirri, Zermani
Edoardo Cresci

164

Modern architectural poetics
in Brazilian contemporary architecture
Solange Moura Lima de Aragão

170

Anticlassical Codes. Episodes of contemporary Italian
architecture through Bruno Zevi's Seven Invariables
Alessia Gallo

176

The girls of the Sixties. Women architects of the golden age of
Rome. Paola D'Ercole, the cities of paper
Carla Ghezzi

184

Lyric spatial agency: poetic practices and situated knowledge
in the design process
Jeremy Allan Hawkins

186

Aniconic PoMo: a boundary line of language and drawing
Roberto Vincenzo Iossa

194

Parallel languages. The project, poetically
Silvana Kühnz, Silvia Parentini

200

The presence of light space. A trajectory of Italian ephemeral
architecture from Renzo Zavannella to Francesco Librizzi
Edoardo Marchese

208

"Architettura Parametrica".
Luigi Moretti's theory for a new architectural language.
Martina Meulli

216

Collages and ‘assemblage design’. Re – designing contemporary identities, architectures, landscapes <i>Giuseppe D’Ascoli</i>	392	Language an code in the digital. A new “schism” between technology and its tools in architectural design? <i>Roberta Lucente, Giuseppe Canestrino</i>	478
The art of kintsugi as a metaphor for building the city by parts <i>Ermelinda Di Chiara</i>	400	Coat – Cappa – Chapel: new expressions in contemporary european chapel <i>Andreas Luescher</i>	486
Morphological transformation. Oswald Mathias Ungers and the Morsbroich Museum in Leverkusen <i>Andrea D’Urzo</i>	406	The sizes of the shape. Variants and invariants in the architectural design <i>Luigi Savio Margagliotta</i>	494
Syntagmatic architectural overwriting <i>Alessandro Gaiani</i>	416	The issue of density. Canon and code of the contemporary city <i>Elisa Maruelli</i>	502
Space, Time, Arts and Crafts. The classic references of a liquid period <i>Ludovica Grompone</i>	424	The performing porosity of inorganic space. Restoring a communication <i>Fabrizio Marzilli</i>	508
Towards new design epistemologies: conversations between chemistry and life <i>Rolf Hughes, Rachel Armstrong</i>	432	Transformations/Transmutations. Bertoja vs Mosso: tensions – vibrations – transparencies in the architectural space <i>Andreina Milan</i>	514
De – coding human living space <i>Bora Kelmendi</i>	440	After the natural, the graft. “Artificialis”: Laurent Grasso at the museum d’Orsay <i>Laura Mucciolo</i>	522
The informal canon of Mediterranean spatiality <i>Alessandro Lanzetta, Angela Fiorelli</i>	446	Visual spaces of change: use, perception, moment <i>Pedro Leão Neto, Miguel Santos</i>	530
Rewriting architecture. The question of language as a rhetorical device for reconstruction <i>Tommaso Lolli</i>	454	The mutation of typological elements in the formative and transformative process of school architecture in Rome <i>Cinzia Paciolla</i>	538
The sustainability of the city through (urban) form: A speculative inquiry along Tirana’s main axis <i>Skender Luarasi, Lllazar Kumaraku</i>	462	Inclusive architecture. A language for each one <i>Chiara Pecilli</i>	546
The collage – montage as an ‘analogical method’. Compositional exercises for the new Vkhutemas ideal museum in Moscow <i>Oreste Lubrano</i>	470	Constants in sacred space <i>Emel Petërçi</i>	552

Eight short notes on the parallel tables

Francesca Addario, Fabio Balducci, Federica Conte, Andrea D'Urzo, Tommaso Lolli, Enrico Marani, Paolo Marcoaldi, Luigi Savio Margagliotta, Alice Monacelli, Alessandro Oltremarini, Michele Pellino, Thomas Pedrazzini, Giorgio Quintiliani, Matteo Saldarini, Andrea Siciliani

The following are the comments of the chairs who coordinated the eight parallel tables that took place during the conference. The organization of the tables started from the three main tracks (track A: genealogy/Poetic; track B: Metamorphosis/Actions; track C: Multiplicity/Communication), but it has undergone decisive variations according to some thematic and/or interpretative affinities and/or divergences. These variations were identified among some papers that do not necessarily adhere to the same track and which were presented by the authors who participated in the parallel sessions.

PARALLEL TABLE A.1

Chair: Francesca Addario, Michele Pellino

Participants: Alessandra Capanna | Alessandra Como | Luisa Smeragliuolo Perrotta | Edoardo Cresci | Gaspare Oliva | Michele Pellino | Matteo Romanato | Francesca Spacagna | Federica Visconti, Renato Capozzi | Francesca Addario

The purpose of an international conference is to collect as many reflections and experiences as possible on a debate topic that, for obvious reasons, can be declined by the discussants in multiple ways and from different points of view, between plausible affinities but also profound divergences. In that sense, ranging transversally from the architectural project to the works of art, the contributions of the A1 session were rather heterogeneous highlighting specific issues inherent to the value (or otherwise) of a language that in contemporaneity, carry out the the expression, the transmission and the information. As regards the session in particular, the discussion passed moved from those who questioned if in the relationship between architecture and fashion, the expressive codes of

communication can constitute occasions for reformulation of aesthetic and architectural canons (Capanna), to who, intending construction in inclusive terms, has reflected on the contribution of installations in the definition of an architectural language (Oliva); from who, through the G. Grassi's work, has spoken about the architectural character, and making evident the reason of buildings' being, focusing on the syntactic aspects of architecture (Addario), to who, continuing on similar themes, designed a genealogical path made up of works in which expressiveness is entrusted to the construction and, in particular, to the slabs as they overlap (Pellino); from those who have demonstrated, through the project, how between construction and composition there is an inseparable correspondence aimed to the intelligibility of the work (Capozzi – Visconti), to those who have seen in the critical re – elaborating of memory an impact in the formulation of a new alphabet and a new imagery for the project (Smeragliuolo – Perrotta); and those studies that considered abstraction a tool for re – elaborating scenic compositions (Spacagna), to those who, not least, underlining the contradiction with the present

where the body claims its pervasiveness, has spoken about the manumission of the canon of the human body in art for an aesthetic purposes (Romanato). Because it is typical of contemporaneity speaking different languages, through a plurality of codes that do not always replace a correspondence of meaning, perhaps it would be necessary, and appropriate, reflect today on the great value that the difference can bring in the aesthetic canon in the direction of a koinè, perhaps cultural rather than dialect, above all, cultural.

Francesca Addario, Michele Pellino

PARALLEL TABLE A.2

Chair: Andrea Siciliani, Matteo Saldarini

Participants: Francesca Claudia Maria Belloni | Jeremy Allan Hawkins | Roberto Vincenzo Iossa | Edoardo Marchese | Matteo Saldarini | Mariangela Ludovica Santarsiero | Andrea Scalas | Concetta Tavoletta | Andrea Siciliani

Session A2, subjected to a retrospective look, saw the participants start from a shared point of view: architecture, reflecting on the origin of things and on the deep meaning of form, must learn again to put into practice the truth. In the attempt to do this, a fundamental help is offered by the field of art; in fact, architecture, making use of the tools and modes of artistic expression, can go back to questioning itself in search of the reasons for the project and be able to reveal a “truer” truth hidden in the reality of things, which in some way lies behind them waiting to be rediscovered. The contemporary architect, like Canaletto with his famous *Capriccio* with Palladian buildings, has to search for new ways of synthesis and contamination between art and architecture, thanks to which he can obtain a new look at things: transfigured realities in fertile contrast between what they are and what they could be, a dynamic balance between real and imaginary that is able to feed the architect’s compositional faculty with precious suggestions. The moment of drawing in architecture becomes the main limbo – territory of this experimentation, intended not so much as an operative instrument for defining the project as rather as that form of thought in which it is possible

to estrange things from their normal field of existence in order to make them react together, seizing unexpected possibilities and concatenations. Codes, canons, orders, neologisms and transcriptions come to life through new and multiple methodological approaches that allow to clean the language from self – referentiality and aim at a clear construction of the project narrative. And it is precisely in the intelligibility of the method that it is possible to find the measure of the expressive plurality of the architectural language, and to avoid its stiffening by giving space to the uncertain and the ephemeral. In this lies the civil and moral duty of the architect: only the clarity of the method allows the project to be relevant for the purposes of disciplinary knowledge, to be explained, understood and even not shared or rejected.

Andrea Siciliani, Matteo Saldarini

PARALLEL TABLE A.3

Chair: Luigi Savio Margagliotta, Thomas Pedrazzini

Participants: Solange de Aragão | Alessia Gallo | Alberto Bologna | Martina Meulli | Thomas Pedrazzini | Claudia Pirina, Viola Bertini | Riccardo Renzi | Luigi Savio Margagliotta

The central theme of architectural language in today’s world is been presented in the parallel session A.3 with three different meanings; the first is the expression of shapes and ideas through the architect’s sign, the second as a slow education and evolutive as historical representation of the world by a specific society and its own culture ad, as last, of the variation of the project’s code in relation with eras and places where it is. In the first case the theme is been developed analyzing specific theories and the whole codes that represent the alphabet of shapes of two different Italian architects: Bruno Zevi and Luigi Moretti. In the second one, the contents were about history and geography. On one hand the highlight was the unstopped continuity between the modernity and the tradition as per the case study of Egypt and Spain which, characterized by a formal vocabulary determined by environmental reason, keep on their own linguistic identity although the stream of century and the technological innovation; while, onto Brazilian

contemporary architecture, it is evident a division: the born of two schools of thought, the Paulista and the Rio de Janeiro's ones, follow two different design process but both related to an own reinterpretation of Modernism. On the other hand the example is the opposite one, the ending of historical series often represented by a strange disconnection in a sequence made by events such as war. Is still the case of Brazil, in which contents and art language were influenced by the second world war that changed the evolution of history, or, another example, referring to Iraq, where for the post – war reconstruction, new hypothesis of space based on social aggregation were formulized. In the end there is a third thematic, linked to possible ways that research an interpretation key for the future of the cities and the territory. First study is the urban models regarding environmental sustainability and greening as an answer to nowadays cities problems, while the second was focused on the reflection on architectural project on the territorial dimension, in which in the passage to the big scale, in which its own expression and interpretation code changes but not the method of composition that, in every scale, presides over the formal construction. As a general consideration, the result of the session is been very diversified both on themes and on the approaches on them. Argumentations, although concerning autonomous fields on action, have been a general panorama, on past and future, for the world reading under different point of view. In every thematic the common point is the reading of contemporaneity through the past or toward the imagination of possible scenarios, reflecting on cities future and on the architectural design role. Matters that animated the final discussion have been highlighted with different aspects both on thematic, interpretation and stimulating reflections, often still opened, perhaps to be deeply examined in a next round table.

Luigi Savio Margagliotta, Thomas Pedrazzini

PARALLEL TABLE B.1

Chair: Fabio Balducci, Paolo Marcoaldi

Participants: Rolf Hughes, Rachel Armstrong | Oreste Lubrano | Andreas Luescher | Elisa Maruelli | Giuseppe Rociola | Salvatore

Rugino | Gerardo Semprebon, Luca Maria Francesco Fabris | Anna Irene Del Monaco | Fabio Balducci, Paolo Marcoaldi

The topic track of the parallel table B.1 dealt with the theme of metamorphosis, however some of the contributions have escaped this sort of taxonomy. This is probably due to the different backgrounds of the various participants, because the session was attended by writers, set designers, scholars in architecture with specializations in medicine, experts in digital architecture or researchers working in the field of emergency architecture. Certainly “metamorphosis” is a legitimate thread for all the studies presented and its semantic transversality has allowed the curators to use it as an interpretative tool capable of keeping together, in a wide category, topics and themes that are also very distant from each other. In fact, if for some of the studies presented this term is synonymous with variation, change, and therefore a non – dramatic passage and an evolutionary process, for other contributions “metamorphosis” is synonymous with transformation, radical change to another form, and therefore a dramatic transition between two different conditions. To propose a brief description and a possible comparison of what emerged from the day, we consider it useful to make use of some opposing diptychs. *Type – antitype*. Some contributions have described stations (Rociola), shrines (Balducci and Marcoaldi), chapels (Luescher), museums (Lubrano). On the other hand, two of them (Hughes and Armstrong; Rugino), perhaps the most eccentric of all, seek not only new codes based on human behavior, but also new architectural forms, in the belief that spaces should be considered not as completed and defined geometric places, but as metamorphic environments, in continuous evolution, escaping every possible typological classification. *Urban – anti – urban*. Two contributions dealt directly with the theme of the city: one in a broad sense, provocatively proposing possible new development scenarios (Del Monaco), the second one by analyzing the recent history of the vertical city (Maruelli). One contribution dealt with the theme of rural architecture of a specific geographical area (Semperbon and Fabris), while others, more indirectly, dealt with markedly anti – urban scenarios. For example, Andreas Luescher interpreted

the theme of chapels by attributing an anti – urban condition to them also in an etymological sense, because the chapel derives from a hood, and therefore as a place for a spatial, bodily and immersive experience within nature. *Small – large*: some contributions described single architectural artifacts, while others addressed the theme of the large scale (Semperbon and Fabris, Del Monaco) or the relationship between interscalar quantities (Balducci and Marcoaldi). In some cases (Maruelli), the large scale takes on a global dimension. In conclusion of these brief considerations, we believe that the breadth and ambition of the theme presented in the abstract, which suggested unpublished and original lines of research, have only been respected by some of the participants. Other contributors showed studies, themes and prefigurations already known to the scientific community, adopting, perhaps also due to the need for brevity, rather conventional methods of presentation.

Fabio Balducci, Paolo Marcoaldi

PARALLEL TABLE B.2

Chair: Giorgio Quintiliani, Tommaso Lolli

Participants: Barbara Coppetti | Ludovica Grompone | Alessandro Lanzetta, Angela Fiorelli | Tommaso Lolli | Laura Mucciolo | Pedro Leão Neto, Miguel Santos | Antonio Riondino | Marco Russo | Giorgio Quintiliani

The parallel table discussion, which met on the theme defined by metamorphosis /actions dyad, turned out very differentiated and, for this reason, bearer of suggestions and plural points of view respect to the question of language in architecture. Language is seen as a fundamental element for the observation, reading and production of architectural material: it appears to be autonomous, proving to be a method of setting or controlling an operational strategy, but at the same time, heteronomous, configuring itself as a meaning manifestation or a possibility of project's free interpretation. The mediation of other arts such as painting, cinema, photography, has often been a key to understanding architecture and its languages, and which implicitly defined it as a kaleidoscope able of unfolding

through different lenses. In a brief examination different meanings of language have been reported. A language to represent architecture, such as the one underlined by Coppetti through the importance of the expressive means used to tell it, the collage, which in its abstraction lends itself to expressing meaning better than a hyper – realistic rendering, more suited to persuading than to communicate. Just as Grompone has interposed the mediation of art as a tool to bring to light the expression of contemporaneity. A language for designing architecture, as in Fiorelli and Lanzetti's contribution on the Mediterranean informal canon, in which an idea of language understood in its generative and settlement component was exposed, how in projects from various eras and places this can be found and still be current and active in the contemporary. As well as in Quintiliani's contribution on the correspondences between composition, typology and semiology in buildings for education design. A language to learn about architecture, as in the contributions of Riondino on hypertextuality or Mucciolo on the work of Laurent Grasso, in which art is understood as a possible anticipation and inspiration of architectural replies, that highlight permanent themes such as the relationship with history or with nature; as in the Leão Neto and Santos's contribution which explores the nuances of meaning that can emerge from a project through photography. A language to rewrite architecture, as in Russo's contribution, on the metamorphic relationship between meaning, form and construction in Labò's work, which welds the project into a unity made up of recognisability and consistency of the building, composed by different languages. As well as in Lolli's contribution who tackles, through some case studies, the question about language as a rhetorical reconstruction tool. In conclusion, the table proposals reveal a substantial need for theme discussion on the codes and canons of architectural language, also supported by a profound contributions heterogeneity, but at the same time unraveling a series of reflections on themes that are always central to the discipline such as meaning, representation and form.

Giorgio Quintiliani, Tommaso Lolli

PARALLEL TABLE B.3

Chair: Andrea D'Urzo, Ermelinda Di Chiara

Participants: Giovanni Comi | Giuseppe D'Ascoli | Ermelinda Di Chiara | Bora Kelmendi | Roberta Lucente, Giuseppe Canestrino | Fabrizio Marzilli | Chiara Pecilli | Emel Petërçi | Giuseppina Scavuzzo | Andrea D'Urzo

Looking for synthesis, a connecting thread, among the contributions presented in the parallel table B.3, it is possible to trace some common lines among the research presented. Although with different themes and certainly with different approaches, the various contributions resonate. The first is a line that can be defined as a “line of representativeness”. Roberta Lucente and Giuseppe Canestrino have brought to our attention the ability of new technologies, whose code is by its nature an exact form, to transform contemporary architectural language. The contribution of Giuseppe d'Ascoli is placed in a somewhat assonant position. Starting from the analysis of the image homologation that today conveys the architecture, he identifies in the collage an instrument of action, an ambivalent moment which can represent at the same time a phase of experimentation and one of design synthesis. Then there is a line that can be defined as a “line of exteriority”, that is the one presented by Giovanni Comi, through the very powerful example of the constructions of Alpine villages. For Comi the meaning of language has to be found in the relationship between architecture and context, therefore outside these two elements, defining the context, the landscape, as a consequence of social and cultural construction. Comi, however, also focuses on the need to reinvent the relationship between man and construction for the contemporary world. Finally, another line is the one shared by Bora Kelmendi, Emel Peterci, Giuseppina Scavuzzo and, with a particular point of view, also Chiara Pecilli. This line can be defined as “internal” or “intimate”. Kelmendi with the analysis of some canonical living spaces in the Kosovar capital Pristina. Peterci through a research on the constants, and therefore on the possible codes, which can be found in the definition of a sacred space of any religious confession. Professor Scavuzzo with a contribution on the code of absence, or rather on that subtle ideal place that

constitutes the imprint of a building envelope. The footprint of the space, like that of Robinson Crusoe's foot on the sand. Chiara Pecilli's contribution is internal and intimate in a different way because she shows us the possibility of interpreting the project according to a new code, namely that of inclusiveness. Not an adaptation, a manipulation of the canon, but the need to create a code capable of being at the service of man in the totality of his possibilities.

Andrea D'Urzo

PARALLEL TABLE B.4

Chair: Federica Conte, Alice Monacelli

Participants: Angela Bruni | Maria D'Ambrosio, Enrica Spada | Skender Luarasi, Ljazar Kumaraku | Andreina Milan | Greta Pitanti | Cristian Sammarco | Dina Nencini | Federica Conte, Alice Monacelli

In the virtual room Metamorphosis and actions, we discussed the relationship between canons and codes in the language of art throughout different points of view. Each of the interventions demonstrated how in the art world there is a universe that comprehends a lot of disciplines like architecture, dance, landscape, mythology, sociology and sculpture, which cooperate in order to maintain a diversification in our culture. Despite the heterogeneity of this panorama, two major macro – themes can be summarized: the first one analyses and measures space through “the body” and “human perception”, the other one deals with the landscape – architectural scale, observing the space in relation to the context and its transformations. With respect to the first theme, the ‘Embodied education’ research by Maria D'Ambrosio and Enrica Spada investigates the relationship between the individual and the context, highlighting how the kinetics of the body in relation to space can be an empathic method of understanding the everyday life. Here not only the action decodes the space, but also the pause and silence become necessary gestures for its understanding: through a balance between empty and full it is possible to establish a bond of community. Regarding the second theme, Angela Bruni's research highlights the experience of several authors who use the piraeanesian transience to summarize the fragmentation of reality. This

point of view appears very useful to describe the today's suburbs reality, understood as places born from different spatial superimpositions and lacking a connective code that guarantees their global understanding. The research of Skendar Luarasi and Ljazar Kumaraku investigates the complexity of some Albanian marginal areas with project proposals of great interest, focusing on the search for the ideal urban typology in terms of densification and land use. The composition of the individual architectures uses the pre-existing *forma urbis* as a reference language to underline its roots in the past and its metamorphosis for future development. In becoming aware of this transformation, the different reading codes taken into consideration become constructive and aggregative principles, regulating the laws of living together within a certain temporal dimension: varying in time and composition, volumes can convey new messages, which we could offer a key lecture for nowadays cities. Just like the rules of construction and its interaction with the territory, the rules of living together are constantly changing: as a result of new economic and social needs, situations such as the pandemic force us to reflect on how to manage our spaces according to others. It therefore appears necessary to re-evaluate the research on public space (as illustrated by the Greta Pitanti's intervention) within the value of architectural language. By questioning the future of these spaces, it is consequently possible to understand interpersonal relationships with the urban context: in this vision, built space and lived space connect to each other, defining what are the continuously changing codes of living, which are transforming even deeply consolidated realities such as the Venice's one.

Federica Conte, Alice Monacelli

PARALLEL TABLE C.1

Chair: Alessandro Oltremarini, Enrico Marani

Participants: Daniel Comsa, Delia Prisecaru | Sara Cuccu, Claudia Pintor | Alessandro Gaiani | Elham Hassani | Marco Lecis | Benedetta Tamburini | Maria Pina Usai | Ettore Vadini | Alessandro Oltremarini

Session C.1 collected the contributions of the authors who joined track C – “Multiplicity / communication” politics,

media, intercodes – and other contributions that dealt with similar issues. The authors heterogeneously dealt with the theme and key words of the conference (language, canon and code). However – although not so explicitly – in their contributions language is expressed as an interpretative code necessary to address some sensitive issues in the contemporary world: above all political and environmental issues, held together by the social question. Specifically, the attention to the concept oscillates between its possibility of constituting a useful material for the understanding and transcription of the signs of a space – time reality and its ‘destiny’ to be an essential part for the communication of a social content: if the first condition implies that the ‘reader’/‘writer’ of that reality must make a choice of field – declare his interest/disinterest in the aesthetics of those signs –, the obligatory presence of language represents a sort of ‘condemnation’ the ‘reader’/‘writer’, who cannot and must not – for ethical reasons – ignore the expressive results of the adopted code. Therefore, on the question of the canon, the contributions are divided between those for which it or his research represent the architect's tool, useful for exploring and responding to these issues even by transgressing them, and those for which the canon loses all function, while instead the contents and the social role of art and architecture acquire interest as sufficient facts to re-semantize contemporary codes. This last path is followed by the contributions of Maria Pina Usai and Elham Hassani, through the use of art, in and on architecture, as a tool for interaction and awareness of the environment and the human being. The contributions of Marco Lecis and that of Claudia Pintor and Sara Cuccu focused on the use of architecture as a background (in cinema, art but also in video games) with the aim of understanding the layering of meanings in the comparison between reality and virtual. Another group consists of the works of Alessandro Gaiani, Alessandro Oltremarini and Benedetta Tamburini who in different ways have posed the questions of the paradigm of architecture in relation to history and the contemporary. Overall, a complex, fragmented, contradictory but extremely interesting look: on the contemporary, like the contemporary.

Alessandro Oltremarini, Enrico Marani

Rewriting architecture. The question of language as a rhetorical device for reconstruction

TRACK B. METAMORPHOSIS / ACTIONS

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The argument that the problem of architectural language is of extreme importance in processes of architectural and urban reconstruction may appear to be a trivial conclusion, but if we consider the case of Frankfurt's Dom Roemer district, completed in 2018 and rebuilt in the medieval style, we spontaneously ask ourselves what cultural distance has been travelled since the Second World War, when cities such as Warsaw mimetically rebuilt their historic centres. From Frankfurt, however, it is possible to abstract the two primary impulses that precede a reconstruction process: on the one hand, the reconstruction carried out with International Style skyscrapers throughout the post-war period aspires to be the theatre of prophecy for the city, the will to promote a new urban idea; on the other hand, the Dom Roemer district is inserted as a bulwark to preserve the historical identity of the city, its theatre of memory. The reflection to be made on a disciplinary level is how, in reality, these two opposing impulses are not in contrast in the processes of urban evolution: just as the architectural language has its own evolutionary component – the ability to adapt to the figurative needs of its time – so urban identity is often founded precisely on an valid discord (Venturi 1991) between different languages, which finds its own harmony and representativeness in discontinuity: what about Piazza San Marco in Venice, where the Basilica of San Marco, the Biblioteca Marciana and the Palazzo Ducale not only coexist, but determine the identity of the square? This reasoning can also be conducted on a number of case studies exploring the coexistence of different languages in new architectures, attempting to restore a new architectural and urban identity without eliminating the previous one: just as Zumthor's Kolumba Museum in Cologne is very clear in its demarcation of pre-existing from new building interventions, though always in their final unification, the coexistence of memory and prophecy is a theme, articulated in different ways, also in the expansion of the National Gallery in London (the Sainsbury Wing) by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown – borrowing some iconography from the historic building; in Leon Battista Alberti's Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini – with the rough superimposition of two compositional rhythms; in Andrea Palladio's Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza – where the discrepancy between the new rule and the rhythm of the historic building is softened by the structure of the serliana.

Introduction. Language and reconstruction

The statement that language plays an important role in architectural and urban reconstruction projects appears probably as a self – evident conclusion; however, if one considers the reconstruction of a medieval central district of the city of Frankfurt, the Dom Roemer (completed in 2018 and reconstructed in style), it is inevitable to inquire how far scientific and practical reflection on this topic has (or had) reached, and what cultural distance has been covered since the Second World War, when the example of Warsaw inaugurated, in a manner of speaking, a strand of mnemonic and mimetic reconstruction for the city centres. The case of Frankfurt appears particularly significant precisely because of the city's recent history: almost an economic and financial embassy of the United States in Europe, which over the last seventy years has imported from the latter an appreciation of and recourse to the International Style skyscraper type; which, in some ways, has built its oratory on technical, technological and financial advancement; but which, at the end of the process, finds refuge in an uncritical, essentially stylistic reconstruction, in order to recover a surrogate urban identity. One could almost write, paraphrasing the subtitle of Reyner Banham's article in *Architectural Review* (1959), *Frankfurt's retreat from contemporaneity?*

Leaving aside the implicit provocation of this suggestion, it is evident that in the case of Frankfurt two opposing impulses to reconstruction can be isolated: on the one hand, the desire to maintain firm formal and figurative references to the city's historic urban identity and, on the other, that of making the necessary changes to the city to confront new models and new ideas of the city in a tangible contemporaneity; all ascribable to that original dichotomy lucidly identified by Colin Rowe (1999) as the *theatre of memory as opposed to the theatre of prophecy*. It almost seems as if the decision to recur to a vernacular language for the city of Frankfurt takes on the appearance of a final abjuration to a repeated process of lawfulness towards an International Style, which is increasingly pervasive and uniforming. The question arises whether this successive and circular dialectic between opposite extremes, the saturation of one only to expire in its opposite, is an inevitable dynamic or whether it is possible to identify, within that spectrum of possibilities, an all – encompassing way that manages to integrate both the preservation of urban identity and the aspiration for a new idea of the city in the specific places of reconstruction.

Harmony. Between Discord and Continuity

The disciplinary limits of a stylistic reconstruction similar to the one carried out in the Frankfurt centre are, however, easily apparent: on the one hand, it is evident how such an approach is rarely a prelude to critical and methodological reasoning, as much as it is more likely to exhaust itself in an individual solution; on the other hand, although it is often presented with the prejudice of being the most precautionary and conservative way to reconstruction – almost mechanical in its generative methods – it finds a substantial contradiction in the evolutionary history of cities, since the latter offers many cases in which urban identity is nourished by an (inevitable) *linguistic discontinuity*. The non – trivial question, otherwise, would concern which language to use, which language to identify as best responding to the objectives of reconstruction: a substantial return to the modes of nineteenth – century eclecticism, when the language, grouped in catalogues of styles, had its own reference themes of application (classical language for public buildings, gothic language for religious buildings, etc.). In this sense, one can see how language has always manifested an intrinsic capacity for modification: in a speech at the Royal Society of Arts in London in 1987 (later reported in *Zodiac*), Robert Venturi retraces some of what he calls *deviances*, linguistic anomalies that create a discontinuity with respect to previous languages (combining them with ironic comments): from the pilasters of Palmyra (“A column stuck on the wall – a structural element as a decoration [...] what kind of oxymoron is this? “), Michelangelo's giant order (“How confusing the forms and scale!”), the two

Fig. 1

Peter Zumthor,
Kolumba Museum,
2007

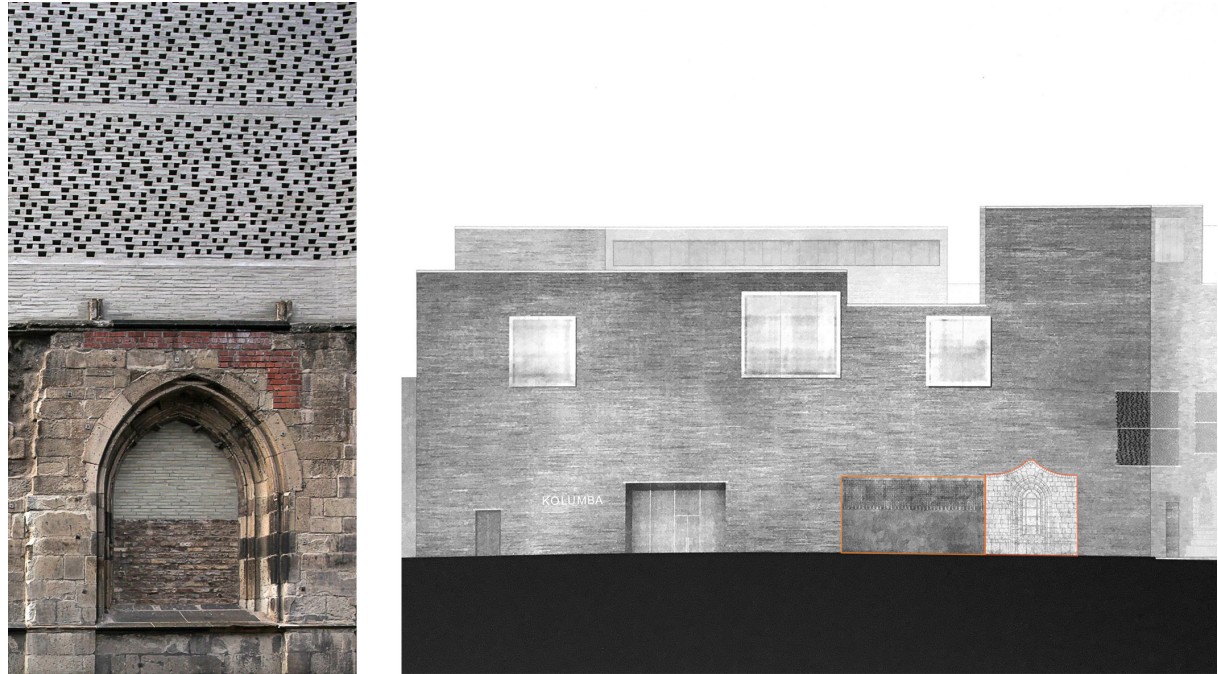
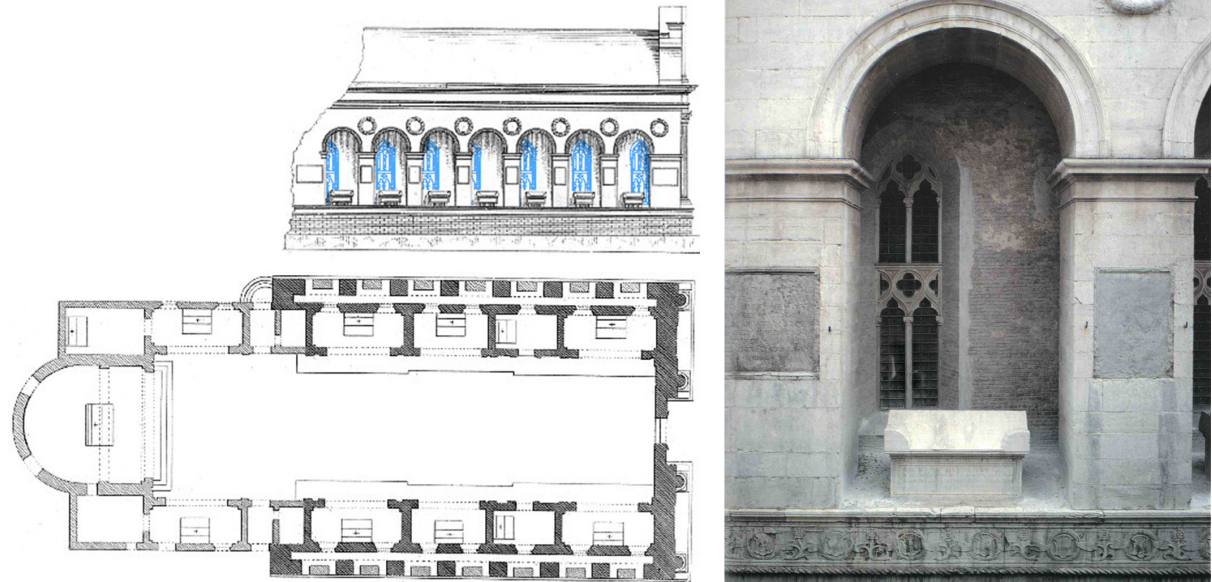


Fig. 2

Leon Battista
Alberti,
Tempio
Malatestiano,
1447 – 1503



superimposed pediments of Palladio's church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, etc. What emerges, therefore, is the substantial evolutionary capacity of architectural language, which finds the most appropriate representative and figurative expedients in every historical moment. The following summation and stratification of these languages leads to what Venturi defines as valid discord: "Cities are constantly evolving, and there are moments when there should be an uncomfortable confrontation expressing some inherent contradictions that come up in any evolving and dynamic situation. Valid discord is an old and basic phenomenon in art. How about the Piazza San Marco, where a strident Byzantine cathedral confronts a patterned 'Ruskinian' Gothic palace across from a highly relieved Renaissance library?" (1991, p. 132). This effective discordance is somehow metabolised by history itself, finally becoming harmonic: "Harmony can be achieved through contrast or analogy. [...] There is room for disharmony in artistic, contextual composition – this is to acknowledge valid contradictions and discontinuities within the whole and to make the overall harmony more sweet" (p. 129).

Case Studies

Contrast and analogy are therefore two reference variables when examining some case studies that explore the relationship between linguistic discontinuity, historical continuity and the dialectic between new and old, finding a possibility of unification in the clear demarcation of reference entities.

One project that provides an exemplary clarification of what is meant by entities of reference is Peter Zumthor's project for the Kolumba Museum in Koln in 2007. In a building fabric extensively damaged by the Second World War, on the site of the former Kolumba Church, the German architect Gottfried Bohm was initially called upon to build a small chapel in 1949. In 1997, a competition was launched to build a diocesan museum, taking into account the pre-existing buildings of both the church and the new chapel. The linguistic discontinuity of Peter Zumthor's project is evident: the project appears as a volume superimposed on the original *in situ* structures, but differs from them in stereometry and material finishes: thin and long bricks rest on the existing structures and integrate them, as if they were gems set in a diadem. The different origins and programmes to which these fragments have been called upon to respond remain evident, but the parts are integrated and involved in the creation of the building's final identity.

The creation of a unified identity while keeping the parts recognisable is also a theme in the design of the Sainsbury Wing, the extension to the National Gallery in London, designed by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in 1991. Although the declaration of *otherness* between new and old is already visible in plans – with the new extension approaching the main building on the western side with an irregular pentagonal form and a diagonal face which, in addition to setting a respectful void, also partially faces Wilkins' building – it is in the elevations that the articulation of this otherness is best revealed. In the design intentions, the extension is imagined as "a reflection and extension of the urban fabric" and therefore "presents a different facade on each of its sides" (p. 93). The front designated for comparison with the historic building is the diagonal one, in which the architects take fragments of the National Gallery's elevation and place them on the extension as well.

Although the same materiality between the two elevations is maintained, the linguistic continuity of the two buildings is mainly delegated to iconographies borrowed from the original building – such as pilasters and windows – which, however, in the new elevation, alter the relationship between signified and signifier: the windows maintain their alignments, proportions and cornices, but have no openings and are, therefore, blind; the pilasters, on the other hand, are positioned in an a – rhythmic manner, concentrated – almost crumpled – mainly at the vertex closest to the National Gallery; the facade also has continuous linear incisions, almost like squares that are incoherent with the rhythm of the windows and pilasters, denouncing the linguistic and iconographic play of the project. However, the most interesting feature is certainly the progressive fading of the elements, which from a high angular concentration diminish in intensity as they move away from the original building.

Fig. 3

Andrea Palladio,
Basilica Palladiana,
1549 – 1614

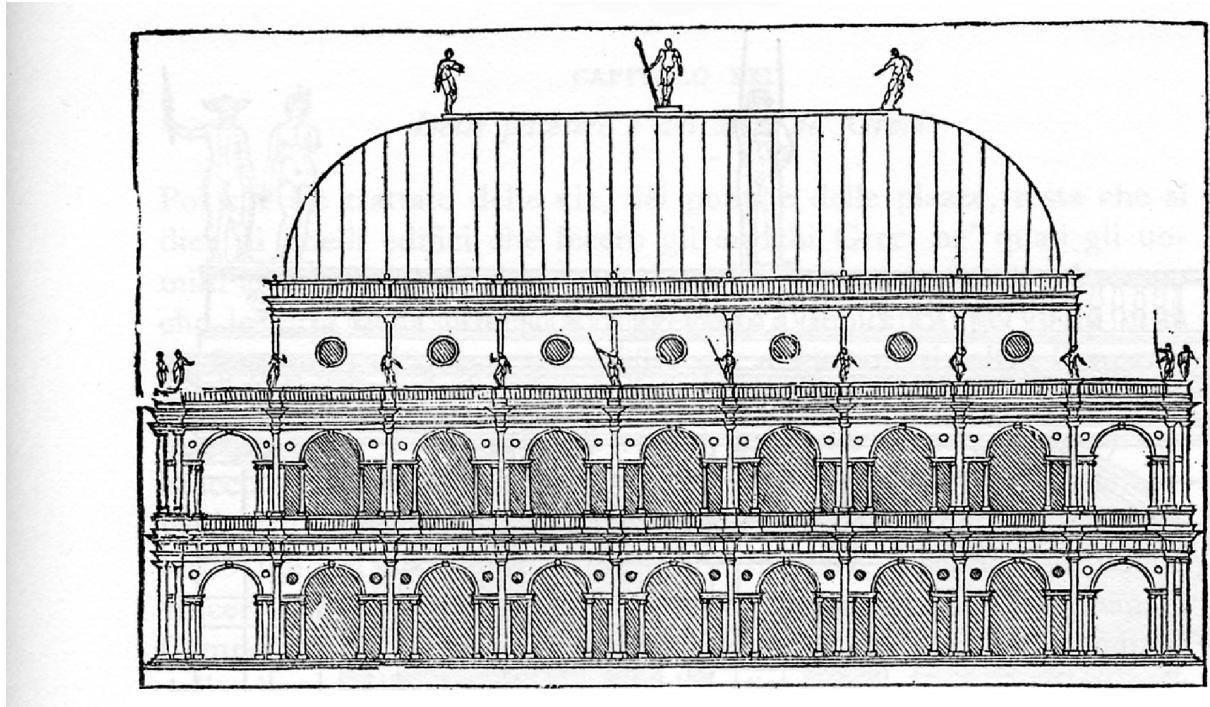
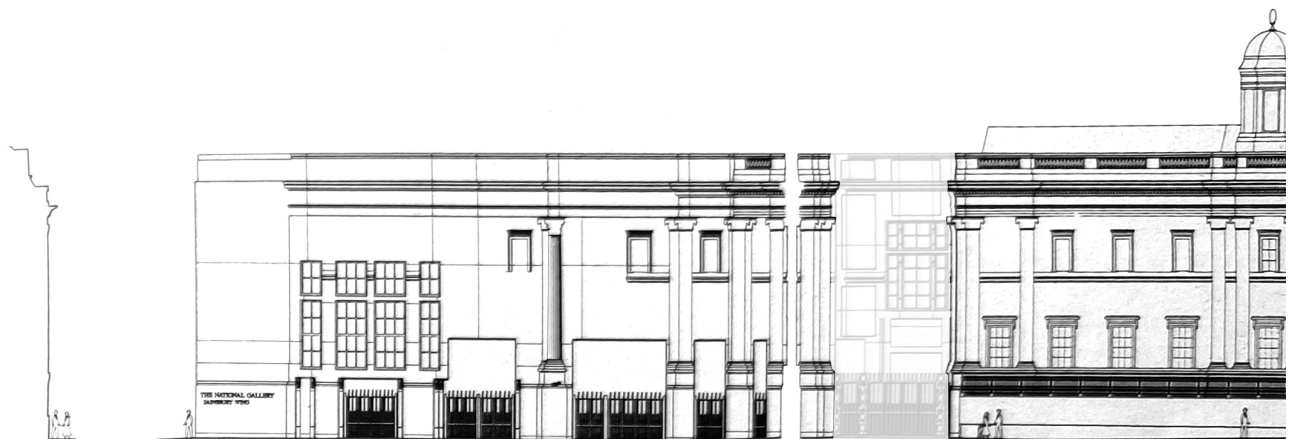


Fig. 4

Robert Venturi,
Denise Scott Brown,
Sainsbury Wing,
1991



Just as the pilasters gradually increase their prominence in relation to the facade – until the last one becomes semi – circular – so the recesses of the blind windows decrease in prominence and gradually lose their sill.

The play expressed by the design of the facade ideally tends towards some *trompe – l’oeil*, such as Bramante’s church of S. Maria in San Satiro in Milan, but does not rely on a Euclidean geometric perspective, but rather on a distorted stereometric projection as if to emphasise the distance, in continuity, between the two buildings. As Venturi (1991, p. 129) writes himself: “Respect to the whole in these cases is especially significant, and here the idea of the building as fragment, the building that inflects, is important. You will see that the National Gallery extension [...] is a kind of fragment; it could not stand alone, or make sense if the old building were somehow to disappear. At the same time we hope the new building is not subservient in its acknowledgement of the old building. It forms a part of a greater whole, but it is also a building on its own and in its own time, contrasting tensely with, and being analogous to, the original building”.

With the same theme of unity in contrast deal also Leon Battista Alberti’s Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini, albeit in a different way – by superimposition and not by juxtaposition. The idea – which Giorgio Grassi describes as both simple and incredibly effective – is to inscribe a pre – existing medieval church, San Francesco, in a new Renaissance shell. This envelope, as well as having a material difference, has two compositional components that unmistakably distinguish it from the underlying structure: a distance of about 50 cm between the two envelopes and a difference in rhythm in the bays. These two expedients create a remarkable architectural tension – almost as if it were a *phenomenal transparency* taken to its maximum possible radicalism – a coexistence of two distinct and independent orders, which nevertheless compose in their sum “an important monument in the city and for the city, a building whose main task is its own spectacle”, responding to a new urban identity, built on the foundations of what was there before. And the assertiveness of this operation is also recognised by Giorgio Grassi, when he notes that “the pre – existing building is always subject to a principle of renewal, which is based on the *raison d’être* of the project, on its task. But this does not prevent the careful consideration and evaluation of the artefact, above all in its building consistency, that is, as a construction. Alberti can also enter into open contradiction with architectural reason, but never with his technical reason, for which he always assumes full responsibility in the project” (2007, p. 46).

A similar technique can be found in the Palazzo della Ragione in Vicenza, with Andrea Palladio’s redefinition intervention. Here, too, there is the creation of a new envelope around a pre – existing body, but with a much greater distance between envelopes – thus, habitable – although less tension between the two levels than in Alberti. It is interesting how this lesser tension appears in Palladio’s own drawings which, in the elevations, obscure the facade of the pre – existing building, giving priority to the language of the new facade in its composition of two bands: one from the two loggias, and one from the great emergence of the ship’s keel roof. If in Alberti the almost rough superimposition of the two rhythms, their friction, is dominant, Palladio’s basilica seeks to create a mediation between the pre – existing building and the new register of the facade with the modulation of two rhythms, and does so through the structure of the *serliana*: just as the arched part maintains the same size and imposes itself as a new rule, the *intercolumnio* of the lintel part is given the task of adapting itself to the dimensions of the pre – existing building (what today would be called an adaptive component) in order to make the two cadences coincide in a syncopated rhythm. This expedient is especially evident in the final bays, as if to denounce the compositional process of distinction.

Conclusions

These case studies explore a possible way to superimpose a new language on a previous building, in fact adapting it to the representative needs of its time without compromising its source, the pre – existing building – as if implicitly demonstrating that contemporaneity is nothing more than the algebraic sum of the remaining of the past with the present.

In this attitude a powerful symbolic charge emerges, allowing the new building to respond both to the demands of memory and to new figurative needs.

This interpretative context cannot but make Giorgio Grassi's assessment appear underestimated, who, although he acknowledges Alberti's intervention as a monument in and for the city, does not recognise the old church "any role other than that of making Alberti's idea all the more evident and spectacular".

The value of these case studies lies precisely in the exemplarity and didacticism that these projects have in presenting themselves as borderline cases for exploring the coexistence of different entities: Alberti's new façade becomes itself an interpretative filter directed at the new city, but one that also manages to transport history, represented by the old church and its shell, into the new city.

If, according to Panofsky (1955), what distinguishes the work of art from a generic object is the *intentio* inherent in the object – that is the property of having been produced to fulfil a specific function, as opposed to the work of art, which lacks this, since its only purpose is to be experienced aesthetically – it could be said that the *intentio* is also what binds the case studies proposed above. *Intentio*, however, not understood as a functional aim, but as a demonstrative one: a fertile substratum that goes beyond the mere aesthetic experience and, exemplarily as well as didactically, rises to the vocation of example, not enclosing the articulation of the argument in the solution to a specific problem but opening disciplinary and methodological reflections.

In a certain sense, this language could be defined as rhetoric, in the definition that Barthes (1970, p. 13) gives of this discipline, i.e. a metalanguage. In logic, a metalanguage is understood as a language through which it is possible to refer to or provide a treatment of another language called *language – object*, without confusing their reading levels. In this sense, rhetoric is understood as a metalanguage that shares the field of application with its *language – object*, i.e. discourse: a discourse on discourse, the ability to construct a discourse correctly, its technique. In this sense, it therefore seems plausible to be able to borrow this distinction of two levels of meaning also to define an architectural rhetoric, an architectural language that always has architecture as its object: an architecture about architecture – almost in a slavish sense – that seeks to construct an architectural discourse on architecture, and does so by keeping the initial components distinct, but having as its final result a single, unitary interpretation of the previous architecture. A construction of architecture that aims to transport the existing material into a new symbolic and narrative context: the idea, therefore, that architecture, in the field of reconstruction, even if linguistically in discontinuity with the pre – existing, can not only rest on invention but has an architecture – object of reference, to be reworked and returned in a new unity. An architecture of a superior degree that has as its objective that of a "language to be reconstructed on its ruins, literally, that is, of a language to be reconstructed together with its meaning, also recovering the reason for being, the sense of that language, indeed adding a new one to it, together with a new form, which, for those who are convinced of the continuity of the architectural experience in time, cannot be other than that single form that holds together the old and the new and that has in the latter the only true reason for being of the old" (Grassi 2007, p. 53).

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