



EDITORIAL

There is plenty of bad architecture all over the place. Stupid, wrong architecture. Architecture that failed, and failed miserably. Architecture that is full of mistakes.

San Rocco 3 does not talk about that. San Rocco 3 is interested in another kind of mistake: mistakes that are the product of a disproportion, of a displacement; mistakes that are somehow generous, open, brave; mistakes that involve some sort of heroic failure; mistakes that shed a new light on the limits of the very same rule that labels them as mistakes.

Mistakes are evident, public. Like rules, they involve some sort of agreement. Mistakes are the opposite of opinions. Actually, mistakes despise opinions even more than rules do. Mistakes can happen only if there is a shared knowledge. Mistakes do not imply a complete refusal of the rule; rather, a rule is opposed by a new and different rule, not by a mistake. Mistakes do not want to do away with the rule; instead, mistakes try to establish a relationship with the rule (even if this is not a very relaxed one). Mistakes are episodes in which the rule manifests itself in all its weakness and clumsiness. Mistakes are a comedy about rules, or the stumbling and stuttering little brothers of rules. There is something intimately didactic about mistakes. As soon as there is a mistake, there is some sort of correction, some sort of teaching, some sort of school.

Mistakes are necessarily plural: if there is *a* rule, there will be plenty of mistakes. Mistakes suggest the possibility (and the necessity) of a new kind of rule, one that could even cope with this specific kind of mistake. Mistakes somehow point toward some forgotten potential. Mistakes are progressive.

Mistakes sometimes contain a certain hubris. Behind every mistake there is somebody that believes he can afford to make that very mistake (as in the case of Bramante and the different dimensions of the orders in his Belvedere, or in that of Bernini and the Doric colonnade with the Ionic frieze for St Peter's Square).

Mistakes are sometimes the product of humbleness: provincial mistakes, made out of distrust, lack of self-confidence or instinctive conservatism (like the exquisite provincialism of the pillars of Figini's house at the Villaggio dei Giornalisti, or the touching clumsiness of the church in Roccaverano).

Mistakes can be intelligent, but they are definitely not smart (smartness, in fact, is about *avoiding* mistakes). Smart mistakes are what Castiglione and Raphael – who were too smart to really like mistakes – called *sprezzatura*, a subtle negligence that undermines the rule without openly discussing it. San Rocco is not interested in that, however: San Rocco is interested in something less polite and riskier (or more honest) – something that involves running the risk of producing a total failure.

Sometimes mistakes happen precisely where different sets of rules conflict, or where different scales intersect. Here the rigorous observation of an overall logic demands that mistakes be made on a smaller scale: "Good reasons must, of force, give place to better" (*Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Scene III). Bramante's Belvedere is full of such mistakes.

Mistakes are sometimes elegant. They can have a particular beauty. They can be as sweet as Buster Keaton or Crazy Kat. They can turn the rule into something milder or gentler. There is a particular talent for making mistakes (think, for instance, of Lewerentz – *early* Lewerentz, of course – or of Alvaro Siza).

In one of his letters, Schönberg (it was Schönberg, wasn't it?) talks about the honesty of Mahler (was it Mahler?) in having written necessarily bad music at moments when bad music was what was called for. Mistakes can be of this kind: disgraceful episodes that make a sacrifice for the sake of the global meaning of a work, voluntary ugly ducklings, self-sacrificing heroes like Judas according to Borges; or deliberate mistakes, such as the incorrect perspective of the coffin in Zurbarán's depiction of St Bonaventura's funeral, the wrong perspective of the Kaaba in popular Muslim prints, the repulsive façade presented to the visitor by the monastery of La Tourette, the portico in front of nothing of the Collegio Elvetico, and the fake windows at Schloss Tegel . . .

Mistakes can also appear when somebody tries to prove that all of the rest of the world is wrong, and problems occur in the situations in which this pure truth collides with the stubborn world that refuses to comply with it. Thus, Palladio's Basilica crashes its proud stairs against a little medieval house, and almost all of Giorgio Grassi's schemes are mutilated at the borders of plots that are invariably too small to host the project that they *should* have hosted.

Mistakes can also involve pure enigma, like the bent pyramid at Dashur. Mistakes imply the existence of a story that we would like to hear.