



SAN ROCCO
SCARY ARCHITECTS
#5 Fall 2012

Registered Office
Dorsoduro 1685/A
I-30123 Venezia
+39 041 0994628

Operative Office
via Pietro Colletta 69
I-20137 Milano
+39 02 49524991

www.sanrocco.info
mail@sanrocco.info

Editor
Matteo Chidoni

Editorial Board
Matteo Costanzo, Kersten Geers,
Francesca Pelllicciari, Giovanni
Piovene, Giovanna Silva,
Pier Paolo Tamburelli, Andrea
Zanderigo

Graphic Design
pupilla grafik, Salottobuono,
Paolo Carpi

Copy Editor
Krystina Stermole

Website
Michele Marchetti

Administration
Ludovico Centis

Collaborators
Chiara Carpenter, Jessica Levine,
Francesco Zorzi

San Rocco is an idea by:
2A+P/A, baukuh, Stefano
Craziani, Office KCDVS, pupilla
grafik, Salottobuono, Giovanna
Silva

For information about
San Rocco or to offer your
support please visit
www.sanrocco.info or contact
us at support@sanrocco.info.

San Rocco is published three
times a year.

San Rocco uses Arnhem and
Ludwig typefaces designed by
Fred Smeijers in 2001/2002 and
2009. They are published by
Ourtype.

Paper: Munken Linx, 100 g/m²
Cover: Fedrigoni Tatami, 250 g/m²

Printed in August 2012 by
Grafiche Antiga, Crocetta del
Montello (Tv), Italy

The editors of *San Rocco* have
been careful to try to contact
all copyright holders of the
illustrations that appear in this
issue, but it was not possible
to find all of them. If you
claim ownership of any of the
illustrations appearing in this
issue and have not been properly
credited, please contact us and
we will be happy to print a formal
acknowledgement in the next
issue.

The material appearing in *San
Rocco* (where not otherwise
mentioned) is published under a
“Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5
Italy” licence.

San Rocco is registered at the
Tribunale di Venezia (Venice,
Italy), registration no. 15,
11/10/2010.

ISSN 2038-4912

EDITORIAL

Architecture is scary.

It is not just difficult to deny this; it is impossible.

Architecture involves something oppressive. Dictators by definition love architecture. Nothing is more typical of dictators than gigantic, tasteless architecture (this is the difference between dictators and gangsters: gangsters only need gigantic, tasteless cars). In Hollywood movies, bad characters are always hidden behind several layers of stone. Good characters usually just have a little house, a very ordinary one, possibly made of wood. Clearly, if you need architecture, something is wrong with you.

This probably has something to do with the origin of architecture. Indeed, architecture appeared at a moment in time when society became more hierarchical, more established. Slavery appeared at the same time as architecture (as did writing, for that matter). Whether it was a cause or a consequence, architecture is somehow related to an increase in hierarchical structure and inequality. Architecture exposes the oppression embedded in our society; it reminds us that our great-great-grandfathers had to slaughter the hunter-gathers in order to produce our lovely boulevards.

Architecture is scary because in order to build, one must destroy. Architecture changes habits, alters traditions, erases the existing, in order to introduce something else.

Architecture forbids: its only way to enhance something is, in fact, to forbid the opposite. Architecture is possibly the supreme act of creative destruction (consider, for instance, how Bramante quickly and brilliantly razed old St Peter's to the ground in order to ensure the realization of his new scheme).

Previous page:

Torres Das Amoreiras, Tomás Taveira, 1980. The three-tower Amoreiras complex (1980-86) houses offices (including the architect's own), apartments and Portugal's first shopping mall. Taveira, who got a chair at the School of Lisbon in 1974 – the year Salazar's dictatorship ended – introduced a new language into the institutional architecture of the brand new democratic state. His buildings are happy, coloured, huge – the power landmarks of the Portuguese capital city.

Architecture is scary because it introduces an exaggerated time-span into our daily life. Architecture not only involves a distant past, but also includes a distant future. Architecture is simply too slow and too cumbersome not to think over the (uber-)long term. Its association with kings and dictators is not just the result of a sadistic passion for oppression: architecture likes kings, tyrants and dictators because they are the only politicians who think about buildings and infrastructure for the long haul, and not just in megalomaniac/monumental terms, but also more reasonably in terms of the fortune they leave to their heirs; indeed, kings invest in palaces because their sons will inherit them. It is the time-horizon of dictators, not dictatorship itself, that is sympathetic to architecture.

Despite all recent attempts to reduce the lifespan of architecture and dream up buildings that could easily disappear (from Futurism on), architecture still disturbs the perfect flatness of contemporaneity, suggesting a longer span of time. And maybe this is what is really scary about architecture: a longer time-horizon unavoidably ushers a new character onto the stage: *death*.

Architecture is scary: this is a truth, not a choice. Still, scariness can also be a choice, a precise desire to scare (one's enemies? one's subjects? one's allies?). The Parthenon, for instance, is a machine designed to scare people. Given the absurd amount of money invested in its construction (a gigantic potlatch?) and its incredible precision, the Parthenon's emergence in the relatively shabby Athens of the 5th century can be understood only as a colossal menace. The precision of the Parthenon is the precision of a weapon of mass destruction. For all the legends about aliens building the pyramids, the most likely building to have been built by aliens is the Parthenon, the scariest object ever constructed on this planet.

So architecture is scary, and making architecture can be a reaction to the discovery of how fundamentally scary architecture is. If architecture is the most tangible sign of an oppressive *architecture of society*, design can be understood as an expression of this original evil. Guido Canella understood architecture in these terms. The dedicated desperation of Canella's architecture is committed to the exhibition of this primitive oppression. As much as Canella's ideological construction is awkward, and as much as his architecture is repulsive (and we're talking about his *best* period), he had something there. The offensive ugliness that Canella laboriously erected in the 1970s in the barren outskirts of Milan is not just the consequence of the

impoverished life of the proletariat, for these nightmares are not only modern, and this oppression is not only that of the working class: it is also the oppression of the bourgeois architect as well as a deeper, somehow unspeakable oppression, a universal *Unbehagen*. Similar nightmares indeed appear in the work of architects as different as Ricardo Bofill, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Kiyonori Kikutake, Hans Poelzig, Paul Rudolph and Carel Weeber.

San Rocco 5 tries to deal with the horror of architecture. What should we think of the architects who have decided to scare the rest of the world deliberately? And what about buildings that are not just big and uncanny, but deliberately dark, windowless, gloomy, repulsive or anti-human? Is scary architecture just a desperate quest for love? As Black Sabbath would put it, "Happiness I cannot feel and love to me is so unreal".



















