

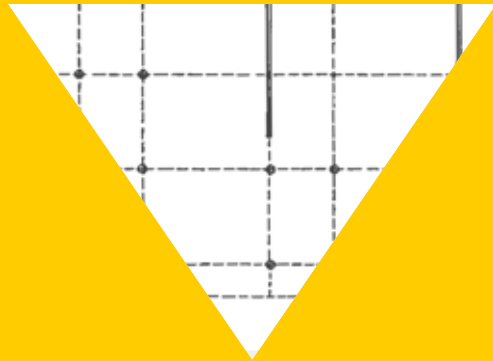


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with texts by
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Palladio

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of the issue #5 of *Fuoco amico*
is addressed to the students of

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIO #1

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same years, agriculture seeks to develop knowledge and techniques that improve soil productivity and products' quality, and transform it from livelihood to the driving economy sector.

It is under these conditions that the patricians of the Serenissima, for the first time, turn to the hinterland with a capillary action of appropriation, reorganization and occupation of the lands, establishing a new regime of the territory based on the architectural type of the villa, a building that combines two different functionalities. On the one hand, it is the residence of the owners of the agricultural fund, and it must represent its social role and satisfy its needs, in terms of comfort and prestige. On the other hand, it is a directional and logistic hub that, in direct contact with the places and activities of production, carries out functions related to cultivation.

Thus, in the Sixteenth Century Venetian Republic, new ideas were needed, capable of combining the new principles of Renaissance architecture with the modernization of the countryside: the first examples fail to set precise charges and oscillate between the simple replication of citizen palaces or models confined to rural habits.

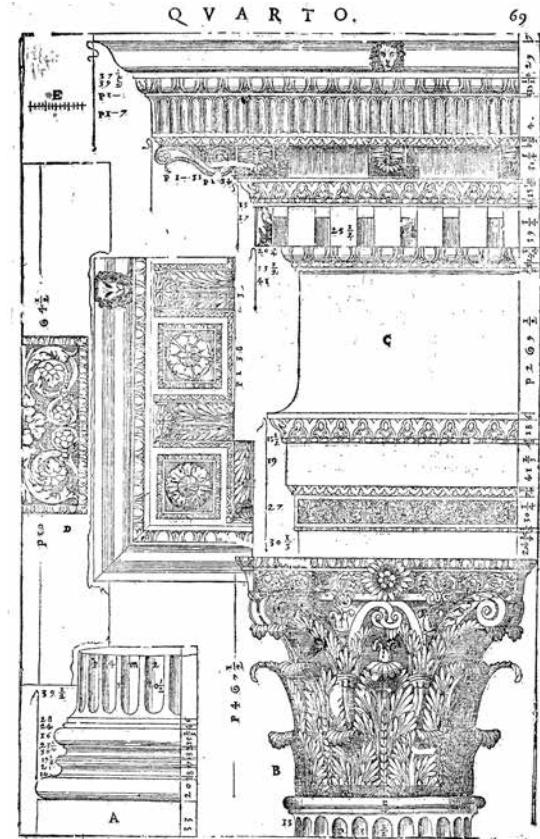
The satisfactory architectural answer, to this new evolution of Venetian society, has come from the

design work of Andrea Palladio, who, in front of this new picture, develops a new architectural device derived directly from the in-depth study, in texts and in situ, of Roman architecture. The invention of Palladio has manifested in a very rapid process, and it is immediately validated by high quality realizations, both technically and economically, with immediate effect. This success results from a new and original compositional system based on known elements: the critical and creative review of another historical heritage. Ideas, images and rules of Palladio's theory don't come from the Venetian local culture, which was also in possession of a specific, and different, heritage of great value and strong identity, but from an intense appropriation of the Roman classical heritage.

We want to take this example of the history of architecture, so important, and so widely known, to advance a parallel with the current situation of the city of Milan. As everyone knows, in recent years the city center has been invested by complex and extensive transformations that have seen the emergence of new neighborhoods, new downtowns, new circulation public spaces. This rapid and often impetuous process, which sprang over twenty years ago, seems to be destined to continue with other

important and large fields of intervention such as the former Expo, the areas now still occupied by the State University in the Città Studi neighborhood, the system of the seven partially dismantled rail yards, the abandoned enclave of Bovisa and other suburban large and uncertain domains.

In these processes, those just past and those that are ongoing right now, the role of architectural design is of enormous importance. The new buildings have often been designed by world-renowned architects, international firms and the best Milanese professionals, and they are now being imposed on the city with their new images that are, in principle, highly characterized by belonging to a generic repertoire. That is, compositional and constructive modes that are very similar in all rapidly changing urban contexts, independently from their cultural and material characters. In this application of tastes, habits, and modes determined by an updated version of the International Style, we are experiencing, here in Mialn, a problem: that is, we note that such important transformations use randomly selected architectural references and, more precisely, that they are imposed by virtue of their proven planetary diffusion, acceptance and success.



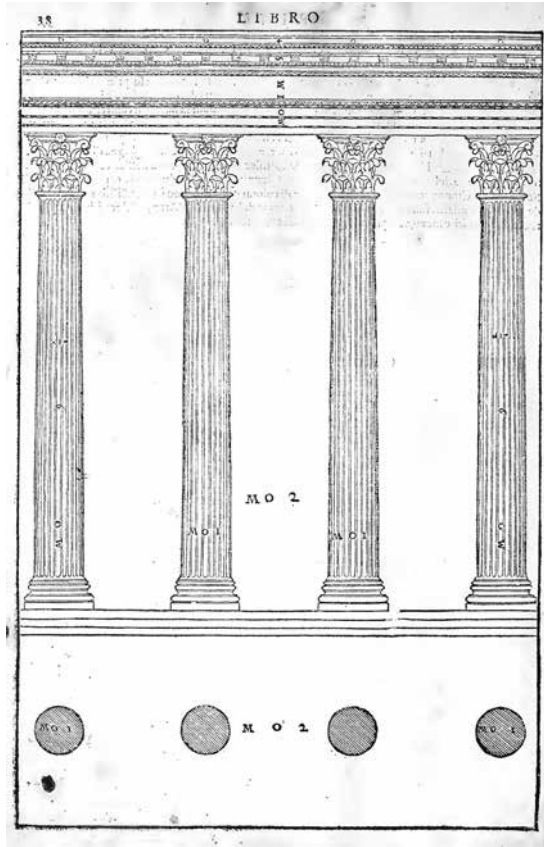
Tempio di Giove Statore, Rome; from Palladio A., *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, Venezia 1570, *Libro quarto*, p. 69.

Our objection doesn't have any vernacular bias, since we do not believe that the new architecture of Milan should resume, or retain, or remember, the peculiar characters of the town's architectural tradition. We believe, however, that the Milanese architectural culture, with its strong peculiarities and skills, should be met with the challenge of these rapid changes by proposing new architectural models. We think that it is also necessary and urgent that to open a communication, that is now closed, between the image of these buildings and a reflection about the social condition and perspectives, which help to renew the criteria for the location and use, typologies and technologies, of the new Milanese architecture.

Therefore, we propose to address the design of one of these areas of transformation from a non-local tradition, that of Palladian architecture, and to apply it to the needs and possibilities of future Milan. It is therefore a theoretical forced, apparently unnatural in-vitro process, which follows the same route that took to the application of the principles of Roman architecture, drawn by Vitruvius and above all by the real innumerable exempla, to the architecture of the Italian cities of the sixteenth century. A forced, colonial practice based on an intellectual program,

as it was the transposition of classical principles of Roman architecture in the Venetian countryside. We believe that this effort, to be made with wide shut eyes to the today's conditions, will lead us to a new awareness of project tools, highlighting formal potentialities and a new typological wealth. The aim of this strategy is to obtain a clear impact in the construction of a part of the city, bringing it out of the international anonymity. We think of buildings and places which will not be necessary addressed, as in some cases of the Milanese center, to soccer players and stars of the show business, and that elaborates with the social and cultural fabric of the city a real relationship, based on understanding problems and potentiality of a Milanese shared lifestyle.

Lastly, a nod to the relationship with nature. Recent Milanese urban transformations have recognized the importance of this theme: new parks (Portello), green urban spaces and gardens (Porta Nuova), new and better relationships with the city's waters – thanks to the recovery of the Darsena and the proposals, now under discussion, for the reopening of Navigli. And, least but not last, the Vertical Wood (Bosco verticale), a striking symbol of the artificial nature of the city and of biodiversity which, in the literal sense,



Dell'ordine corinthio; from Palladio A., *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, Venezia 1570, *Libro primo*, p. 36.

it is just, nothing more than, a façade. The example of Palladian villas, in our intentions, must be the guide for a recovering of a true, intense relationship – not just a bizarre representation of that – with the ground, with nature, with the place, understood in the complexity of its physical and productive features.

The areas that will be transformed over the next few years often have the charm, and also the ecological and economic problems, of terrains vagues, where the organized presence of man has been absent, for years and sometimes for decades, and where a spontaneous nature has developed, living together with the effects of pollution, with debris of abandoned buildings and infrastructures, with the presence of abusive invisible inhabitants who learned to use the resources of these enclaves, deserted and empty as ghost towns. Today, we appreciate the wild charm of these places, with their strange landscape qualities, and often the transformation projects have sought to keep the elements of that strange beauty. For example, there have been many projects following this line of romantic appreciation applied for the recovery of German industrial areas, in the Ruhr region, for Berlin's rail yard and airport, for some abandoned and then restructured public buildings such as the

Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Lingotto in Turin, for many factories converted into exhibition spaces, social centers, commercial spaces and college complexes.

Learning from the Palladian villas will also lead us to a non-superficial relationship with the places, towards an architecture that finds its own reason in the concrete idea of a new world, of new social and ecological frame, in a true and sincere relationship with the present situation and with the future that you would be able to imagine, to design.

Alessandro Rocca



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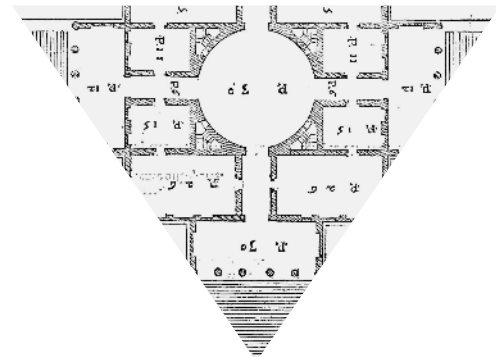
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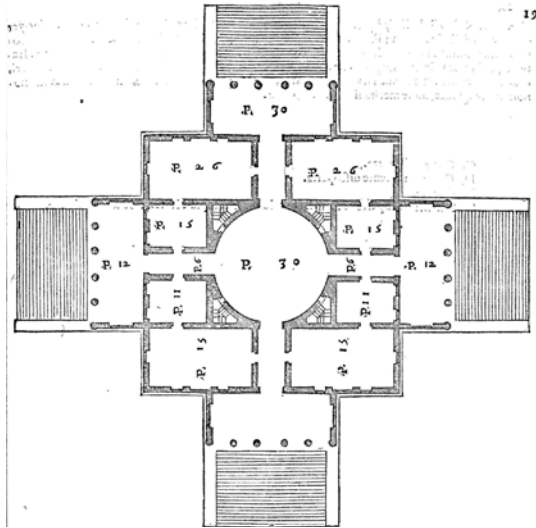
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Palladio

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Rotonda's plan; from Palladio A., *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, Venezia 1570, *Libro secondo*, p. 19.

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