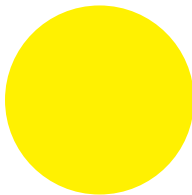


Ten faces
for italian
architecture

– Lamberto Amistadi



1 Grand Tourists

As we know, there are many types of travel and also many ways to travel. The architect’s journey has to do with the time of architecture, whose “sense of history” consists precisely in establishing “a relationship in time between the present moment and the moments that preceded it” (Rogers 1999, p. 9). From this point of view, travel takes place in space and time and is intertwined with the autobiographies of the Grand Tourists, in which travel became a memory of the travelling, in which “fragments of thought” were gathered together outside any reasoning of profit and the classifiable, and fished up from the seabed after the waters (time) had subjected them to a poetic transfiguration, to then be grafted onto the architectural composition process.

1 Luigi Vietti (1903-1998). He might well have given the same answer as Curzio Malaparte did to General Rommel: the house was already there: “I designed the landscape”. The landscape that Vietti invented, together with Jacques Couelle and Michele Busiri Vici, under the aegis of the Aga Khan, is that of the Costa Smeralda, and it is so close to the image of Vietti’s voyages on his sailboat along the coasts of Türkiye, Greece, and southern Italy that he was unable to shake off the tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism. This does not mean that his villas are not cheerful and brimming with expressiveness: they actually resemble the traditional costumes that the girls of Porto Cervo wear to look like real Sardinian peasant women. But this simplistic attempt to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular is precisely what makes these buildings an effective means of communication, certifying their success and that of the architect. The latter only seems to have benefited in part from his vision of the stereotomic purity of northern architecture during a trip to Stockholm.

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2 Carlo Aymonino (1926-2010). One of the cornerstones of the so-called Italian tradition of Urban Studies is the Plan for Pesaro Old Town, drawn up by the Gruppo Architettura (Carlo Aymonino, Costantino Dardi, Gianni Fabbri, Mauro Lena, Raffaele Panella, Gianugo Polesello, and Luciano Semerani) between 1971 and 1974. For the first time, this plan put into practice the theory of the city ‘by parts’, whose formal completeness can be comprehended in the relationship between building typology and urban morphology. Historical cartography is understood synchronically to reveal the permanent characteristics of the city. But above all, it is a plan in which decisions and solutions are made through architecture. As part of the more general intermunicipal plan, the design of the Pesaro School Campus fell to Aymonino. By nature, he always travelled extensively, visiting and analysing numerous Italian and European cities: in *Origine e sviluppo della città moderna* (1971) [“Origin and Development of the Modern City”], drawings of Glasgow, Berlin, Paris, London, and Vienna appear, along with many others of Italian cities.

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AYMONINO C. (1988) - *Piazze d'Italia, Progettare gli spazi aperti*. Electa, Milan.
AYMONINO C. (1975) - *Il significato delle città*. Altralinea, Florence.

3 Aldo Rossi (1931-1997). At the centre of the campus designed by Aymonino stands Rossi’s tower, with all its references to the “*infanzia della forma*” [childhood of form] (Clemente 2008) and to the reality of a local ‘exoticism’ made up of bell towers, lighthouses, and dovecote towers. If, for Thomas Mann, the artist is an adventurer, Rossi was the restless and enthusiastic traveller, and his *Scientific Autobiography* is essentially an account of these

numerous journeys. Kurt Forster (2017) gives us a vivid account of his wanderings in the United States, in which

New England lighthouses won a foothold in his imagination, and deserted stretches of Texas and California merged with his recollections of the agricultural landscape of Lombardy. Thanks to his childhood sensibility for rural conditions, the farmhouses of northern Italy and the ruins of coastal settlements on the Pacific Ocean converged in his latent melancholy, precipitating maudlin memories of a private world long gone.

After his first trip in 1976, Aldo Rossi returned to the United States many times, teaching, giving lectures, and staging two highly successful solo exhibitions at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning in New York (1978) and at the Max Protetch Gallery (1980), culminating in being awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1990.

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4 Luciano Semerani (1933-2021). Back in Pesaro, in 1978 Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro (1983, p. 113; Lee 2024) were commissioned to design the New Cemetery away from the city:

There is no other architecture that, like the cemetery, finds its *raison d'être* in memory. Our cemetery too finds its *raison d'être* in memory. Our cemetery is built by assembling finished models and prototypes. It is constructed through references to our other architectural works, but within the layouts of different cities. [...] The cemetery is thus a synthesis of all the architecture we know.

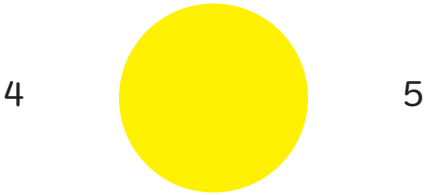
Not only is architectural composition non-topical (Semerani 2010, p. 218),¹ but architecture itself seems placeless, traveling like the “Theatre of the World” on a raft or on wheels like a mask by John Hejduk; then they can also travel in the deeds of their creators and if – as Loos taught us – it is not worth wasting time inventing new architectural types when we have been tasked with building a city, the old works of architecture can take their place in the new “City of the Dead”: the walls surrounding the villages of the Marches region, the path through the woods, the structure of the columbaria that echoes that of the Borgo Teresiano in Trieste, the shed roof over the entrance to the Cattinara Hospital, the public buildings of the San Giobbe project in Venice, or the square-plan volume with a hipped roof and large corner pillars of the Osoppo Town Hall.

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SEMERANI L. (2000) - *Semerani e Tamaro, Architetture e progetti*. Skira, Milan.
SEMERANI L. (2000) - *L'Altro Moderno*. Allemandi, Turin-London.

5 Vittorio Gregotti (1927-2020). The beautiful brick courtyard building that houses the University of Bologna’s Architecture Course on the Cesena Campus is the work of Vittorio Gregotti, one of Italy’s most internationally renowned architects. Although his works undoubtedly rest on less risky foundations, between utopia and realism, it is equally undeniable that this disciplinary certainty led him to travel and erect buildings all over the world: the Belem Cultural Centre (1988-1993), the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona (1985-1989), Pujiang New Town, Shanghai (2000), as well as the restoration and extension of the South Bank Centre in London (1994), residential buildings in Spandau, Berlin (1993), the Opération Sextius-Mirabeau in France (1990), and many other minor works. Among these, the Belem Cultural

¹ “Architectural design is taught to construct the future. Composition works rather in the non-topical. The non-topical is a categorical imperative. It derives from the permanent obligation to go inside, towards the interior of architecture, not towards its future, not towards its past.”



Centre, located opposite the Tagus River, near the Jerónimos Monastery, certainly echoes the morphology of the giant terraces that sweep down from the hills of Lisbon, but also recalls the many stone fortresses that Portuguese navigators built along the coasts of Africa.

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GREGOTTI V. (1966) - *Il territorio dell'architettura*. Feltrinelli, Milan.

6 Gianugo Polesello (1930-2007). A well-known statement by Polesello (2002, p. 22) clearly reminds us of the type of journey that architects undertake in the completion of their work:

The same argument then applied to works of architecture, and from there they are explained in part by our curiosity, our interest and our passion towards the world of architectural metaphysics, of timeless architecture, of mixing at the same time the Attic world or the Egyptian world and the modern world, of seeing the modern world as ancient and of being able to shuffle the cards.

The time of architecture thus appears different from chronological time. It is a circular, specific, and meta-historical time in which, as in dreams, events intermingle in the formal “internal” space where the work is generated between the initial hypothesis and the final outcome. Obviously, Polesello’s design for the Las Palmas University Campus, like the other projects we have discussed, raises the issue of “environmental pre-existences”, which means, as Rogers said, “[The architect] will not design a building in Milan that is the same as the one he would have designed for Brazil” (1997, p. 280); but just as there are different levels of depth, so there are various ways of attuning oneself to an environment.

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7 John Hejduk (1929-2000). “[He] was one of the most original American architects in the 1900s. [...] He studded his work and drawings with angels, demons, animals and machines, in a game of metamorphosis and transfiguration where architecture takes on the role of a sanctuary for art, for culture and for human spirit” (Amistadi, Clemente 2015, p. 3). His artistic life was shaped by a trip he took to Rome in 1953 with his wife Gloria. Their destination was the Palazzo dei Congressi by Libera and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Guerrini, Lapadula, and Romano in the EUR district, which Hejduk had seen a few years earlier in a New York newspaper:

I remember one evening back in the late nineteen forties (when there were still trolley cars moving through snow on frozen tracks in New York) that I first came upon two images, both being in Italy outside of Rome; of a place begun but not finished called “Terza Roma”. Two photographic images which even today haunt; give one a chill; yet fascinate as certain strange unfamiliar landscapes do; which we sense to be mysterious and foreboding; seductive; and dangerous. It is the seemingly bucolic which disturbs (Hejduk 1980, p. 8).

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8 Francesco Venezia (1944). We have included a Neapolitan architect among the Grand Tourists to extend the journey through Italy to where the Grand Tours of European intellectuals between the 17th and last century always took them: Naples and Sicily, after visiting Florence and Rome. Venezia has worked in both Naples and Sicily where, in the late 1980s, he designed the Palazzo di Lorenzo museum and a small open-air pavilion in Gibellina, in which fragments and ruins from Gibellina Vecchia were assembled and layered together with sculptures by Daniel Spoerri and Mimmo Rotella, whose stone sun is a tribute to Tommaso Campanella. His relationship with time dates back to the archetypal reasons for ancient architecture: in 2000, he staged the exhibition “The Etruscans” at Palazzo Grassi in Venice; in 2015, he designed the exhibition “Pompeii and Europe 1748-1943” at the Archaeological Museum of Naples and the Amphitheatre of Pompeii, where he displayed casts of the victims of the eruption in a space covered by a Roman dome built inside an Egyptian pyramid.

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9 Renato Rizzi (1951). Among his many travels, the most important was the one that led him to meet Peter Eisenman in New York, where he was to live and work for ten years between 1984 and 1994. But on any journey worth its salt, the most interesting encounters are the unexpected ones, and his meeting with Eisenman was accompanied by another with John Hejduk, to whom Rizzi (2010, 2020) would go on to devote many studies. What he gained from this was the habit of tracing architecture back to its most authentic archetypal roots, where its form is generated by a relationship with the text: the Kabbalah for Eisenman and the Bible for Hejduk. Thus, just as in great literature, Rizzi's architectural space designates a metaphorical and ontological place where form originates and manifests, escaping from the domain of technology and communication. His major works include the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre (inaugurated in September 2014), for which he was awarded the Gold Medal for Italian Architecture in 2015, and Solomon's Cathedral, Lampedusa, a symbolic site of migration across the Mediterranean.

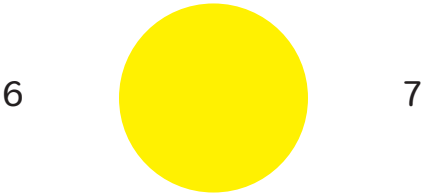
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10 Uwe Schröder (1964). Although he was a professor at RWTH Aachen University, Schröder taught, held workshops, and seminars at numerous Italian universities, including those of Parma, Milan, Bologna-Cesena, Naples, Bari, Catania, and Rome, starting from 2000. It is precisely the dark marks on Giovanni Battista Nolli's “*Pianta Grande di Roma*” [aka “The Nolli Map”] (1748) that conveyed to him the conviction that the essential reasons for architecture lie in its “space,” to the point that all other fundamentals can be traced back to the same concept: the *typos* as a syntactic relationship between “spaces” and the *topos* as a degree of internality/externality of city spaces, which must in any event be defined and delimited. Perhaps it is precisely this awareness of the value of urban boundaries that Schröder gleaned from his travels in Italy and which brought him closer – albeit in an original sense – to his tradition of urban studies. And it was yet another Italian city, Parma, which he used in comparison with Saint-Dié to establish the premises for an idea of the city “after the Time Regime of Modernity” (Schröder 2015).

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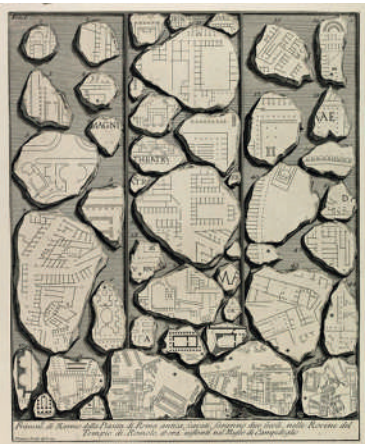
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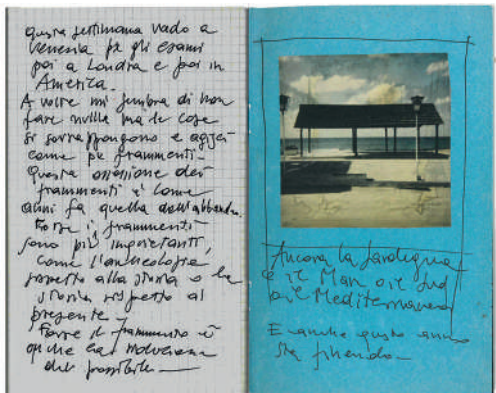
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Wall Atlas

Images and credits

- 1

Francesco Venezia, Wooden pyramid in the Amphitheater of Pompeii for the exhibition *Pompei e l'Europa 1748-1943*, 2015.
- 2

Luigi Vietti, Travel notes on a visit to Alberobello, 1934. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.
- 3

Renato Rizzi, *The Cathedral of Solomon*, Lampedusa, 2016.
- 4

Vittorio Gregotti, Belem Cultural Center, 1988-93.
- 5

Francesco Venezia, Palazzo di Lorenzo museum, Gibellina, 1981-87.
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Fort Jesus, Mombasa (Kenya).
- 7

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Landscape*, 1788. Salzburg Museum, displayed in the exhibition *Goethes italienische Reise* at the Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck.
- 8

John Hejduk, Sketches for Berlin Masque, 1981. Canadian Centre for Architecture.
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Luciano Semerani e Gigetta Tamaro, Osoppo Town Hall, 1976-79. *The Ponte dei Sospiri* - a new "Bridge of Sighs".
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The *Matryoshka*, the Russian dolls.
- 11

Carlo Aymonino, Study sketch of the passages of Paris. From: *Origine e sviluppo della città moderna*, Venice 1971.

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Gianugo Polesello, Las Palmas University Campus, Gran Canaria, 1987-91.
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Gianugo Polesello, Las Palmas University Campus, Gran Canaria, 1987-91. Detail.
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The *Ponte dei Sospiri* in Venice.
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Luigi Vietti, Hotel Cervo in Porto Cervo, 1962-63. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.
- 16

Uwe Schröder, Student residence Rom Hof, Bonn, 2009-14.
- 17

Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Sketch of the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. From: *Aus Schinkler's Nachlaß, Reisetagebücher, Briefe und Aphorismen*, Berlin 1862.
- 18

Renato Rizzi, Shakespearean Theater in Gdańsk, 2005-2014.
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Luigi Vietti, Postcard of an housing district in Stockholm with travel notes, 1931-32. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.
- 20

Aldo Rossi, *The Teatro del Mondo*, 1980.
- 21

Fotografia del Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Guerrini, Lapadula and Romano in the EUR district in Rome. From: John Hejduk, *Cable from Milan*, Domus, 605, 1980.
- 22

Giuseppe Vasi, Excavation of the Obelisk of Augustus in the Campus Martius. From: *Delle magnificenze di Roma antica e moderna*, 1752.
- 23

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Marble fragments from the Map of Ancient Rome. From: *Le Antichità Romane*, Roma 1784.
- 24

Aldo Rossi, *Quaderni azzurri*, n. 42, 1990. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Architecture, criticism, and fatality: A journey south from Cesena through Pesaro and Urbino, and north to Modena and Parma

– Ildebrando Clemente

The following arguments delve into the connections between architectural theory and design in relation to the concept of travel. In particular, in relation to the concept of travel understood not merely as a concrete experience of places from which to draw ideas and forms for a new project, but also as a dimension of the human soul, permanent, meta-historical, and therefore equally important for infusing authentic meaning into design invention. Before discussing the relationship between theory, design, and travel, however, I would like to present an itinerary of places, cities, and architecture from a real journey. It goes without saying that this itinerary should be considered a concrete and conceptual pretext for advancing some reflections on the connections between design and travel.

First stop: The University of Bologna Campus at Cesena. This complex, which also hosts degree courses in architecture, was designed by Vittorio Gregotti. Its construction was completed in 2018. Second stop: The School Campus in the city of Pesaro, designed by Carlo Aymonino. Design of this complex began in 1971, but the campus was only partially completed between 1975 and 1979. Third stop: A visit to the National Gallery of the Marches at the Ducal Palace of Urbino. This extraordinary monumental complex is the result of a convoluted, multi-layered urban history. The urban and architectural layout of the palace as we see it today was the work of Luciano Laurana (commissioned in 1468 by Prince Federico da Montefeltro to complete construction of the palace) followed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, who took over from Laurana in 1472. Fourth stop: The San Cataldo Metropolitan Cemetery in Modena. An extension by Aldo Rossi and Gianni Braghieri designed in 1971 and inaugurated (albeit incomplete) in 1984. Fifth stop: Parma Old Town. The Baptistery of San Giovanni, designed by Benedetto Antelami and built between 1196 and 1216, Piazza Duomo (the cathedral square), and the Pilotta monumental complex.

As mentioned above, the following descriptions of the stages of a journey from Cesena to Pesaro and Urbino, and then from Cesena to Modena and Parma, are not intended as a simple retrospective account of an actual journey, but a pretext for bringing out themes and issues which testify to the idea of the project as the result of a distinctive relationship with the meaning of traveling. When we travel, wrote Claudio Magris, we live in some way convinced that we are immersed in a sort of “suspension of time that occurs when we abandon ourselves to its gentle flow and to what life brings – like a bottle opened underwater and filled with the flow of things”, as Goethe commented while traveling through Italy. In a journey experienced in this way, Magris continued, “places become both stages and dwellings in the journey of life, fleeting stops and roots that make us feel at home in the world. [...] It is no coincidence that travel is first and foremost a return, and teaches us to live more freely, more poetically in our own home” (Magris 2014, pp. IX-X).

In short, again to paraphrase Magris, traveling means coming to terms with reality while embracing its alternatives. Among these is the opportunity to consider reality stripped of its unavoidable daily needs and chores, opening oneself up to the unexpected and its poetic aspects.

So, if it is possible to suspend certain needs and necessities while traveling and rediscover a richer, more poetic, and more conscious relationship with reality, can we similarly suspend functional necessities in design invention with the hope of rediscovering a greater poetic awareness of who we are and what we do? Proceeding with this simulation, we must first imagine a new rationality of architectural design to underpin invention: a *critical rationality* based on an equally *critical theory* of design (Horkheimer 1974).

In this perspective, the theme of travel is tasked with revealing the mystification of the modern design idea, based on an enhancement of *technical*

