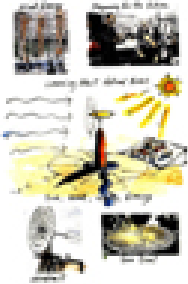


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A New Take on Terragni

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A New Take on Terragni

JANE D. BURNSIDE, *The Queen's University of Belfast*

Three months after the submission date of the Concorso del Palazzo Littorio, Giuseppe Terragni replied to a letter written to the Group by fellow member Luigi Vietti. Vietti's letter demonstrates that he was vying for leadership should their entry be successful and proceed to the next stage. Terragni's response is one of the few pieces of physical evidence providing an insight into the level of group decision making that occurred in 1934, against Vietti's recent claim to the authorship of the highly acclaimed Solution A.

ON OCTOBER 25, 1934, THREE MONTHS AFTER the submission date of the Concorso del Palazzo Littorio, Giuseppe Terragni wrote an "exhaustive and definitive" reply to a letter written to the Group by fellow member Luigi Vietti.¹ The Group consisted of architects Antonio Carminati, Pietro Lingeri, Ernesto Saliva, Terragni, and Vietti, in collaboration with painters Marcello Nizzoli and Mario Sironi. Vietti's letter demonstrates that he was vying for leadership should the Group's entry in the competition be successful and proceed to the next stage. Terragni considered the contents of Vietti's letter of October 19, 1934, to be a personal insult.

Terragni's diplomatic, if somewhat condescending, response is one of the few pieces of physical evidence providing an insight into the level of group decision making that occurred in 1934, against Vietti's recent claim to the authorship of the highly acclaimed Solution A (Figure 1).²

In the translation that follows, Terragni restates for Vietti's benefit, all of the decisions that were made and agreed on by the Group regarding the roles of Solution A and Solution B, as well as the concepts that lay behind them.³

To the friends of Gruppo Milanese, exhibitors at the National Competition (Concorso Nazionale del Littorio): Carminati, Lingeri, Saliva, Terragni, Vietti, Nizzoli, Sironi.

Letter dated 25-10-1934

I have just received that curious masterpiece of inaccuracies and not very good *ballon d'essai* of the old diplomatic school, namely Vietti's letter dated Rome, 19 October 1934 A.XII. This letter, addressed to me in particular, demands an exhaustive and definitive reply. Firstly, I must say that the tone and position taken by Vietti recently (as if he were not part of the Group) seems to me to be revealing a kind of old-fashioned naïveté.

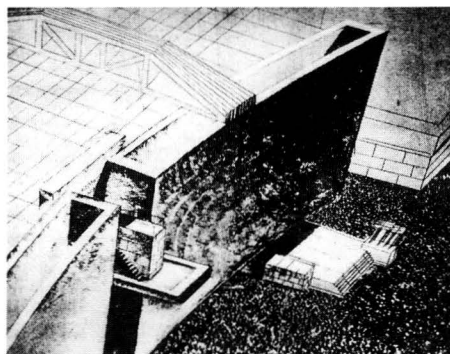
The letter of 19 October clearly underlines his absurd position, but rather than being provocative, is amusing.

Phrases such as "I've always said so . . ." or "If you had listened to me . . . you would have got it right" (the equivalent of his expressions contained in the letter) create the bizarre result of demonstrating that men of

clear intelligence have often a short memory and rely too much on other people's short memory.

Our Group, freely constituted for the Competition, has set duties and has given mutual and common rights to all its members. The Group has a moral and juridical (legal) character that is impregnable to personal ambitions and to attempts to desegregate the Group itself. As long as the Competition will last (even in its executive phase), the Group will have to remain a "block of willpower," and whoever will not wish to accept this necessary agreement of common conduct will be required to step back and refrain from taking any action that would obstruct our common purpose. Dear friends, you will probably say that all this is obvious and that we have all accepted it. Fine. Actually, I am happy to state here what is on everybody's mind. And now, for the purpose of clearing up any other ambiguity that could arise during our future collaboration, allow me to draw everyone's attention, and in particular Vietti's (forgive me for using such tone for my speech), to the following points:

1. All decisions concerning the constitution and organization of the Group (even in its details), the way of working, the choice of architectural solutions (resulting from our equal collaboration), and the presentation of projects were taken unanimously by the Group's members. Therefore, any recrimination and nasty ingenuities such as "I said so," "I told you so," or "If you only listened to me," etc., are vain and totally absurd.
2. It is not true that a split within the Group has occurred. Any such bold



1. Palazzo Littorio Solution A, perspective of front wall with crowd below. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

statement is to be blamed on anyone who has not acted according to the collective spirit of the group, playing on the distance between the town where the Group lives (Milan) and the site of the competition (Rome). The fact that we presented two projects has never caused (and never will) a split in the Group. Here I feel a duty to be the spokesman of the Group and state that, in all consciousness, the Group has the spiritual, artistic and legal power over the two projects, which are the result of ideas, intelligence, and work of all the members of the Group. This has been achieved in absence of any hierarchies of whichever sort, with no prejudices nor artistic tendencies, and with no childish pretenses of being “the smartest in the class.”

The only necessary basis of work, on a spiritual and moral level, is mutual respect. Excuse me if I now feel the duty to make an analytical digression: Project A came to its final concretion through five months of elaboration of ideas. The ideas that were typically and particularly taken collectively are the following:

1. The alignment along the axis of Foro Traiano.
2. Detached bodies according to the different functions of the buildings required by the competition; predominance of the Revolutionary Exhibition Building (*Mostra della Rivoluzione*) and of the Sacrarium (*Sacrario*)—out of regard for the Lombard concept of supremacy of spirituality which has also contributed to the creation of the current exhibition—as opposed to the general intonation of the competition, which gives more importance to the Littorio

Palace (*Palazzo Littorio*) as being the party’s center.

3. Closed wall on Impero Street.
4. The block with the Exhibition Building elevated from the ground, resulting in an original structure.
5. The monumental steps encased between the walls lit from above.
6. The windowless curved wall on Impero Street with the Duce’s balcony.
7. The Arengario following the same shapes of the Exhibition Building.
8. The round-shaped volumes of the Sacrarium detached from the Exhibition Building and sunk into the ground of Imperial Rome.
9. Connection between the Duce’s room and the Exhibition Building because of the spiritual affinity between the two themes.
10. The bringing together through elevation of the two meeting rooms (the one for the 1,000 and the one for the 500).
11. The general concept of integrating with the urban context of the surrounding area (documented in planimetric plans—scale 1:1,000—especially arranged for the purpose) by using pure shapes (square and circle).
12. The concept of focusing in one project the main characteristics, albeit modernly and intelligently interpreted within the context, leaving to the other project the task of expressing the highest possible degree of modernity that was possible to achieve through our efforts and our ideas.

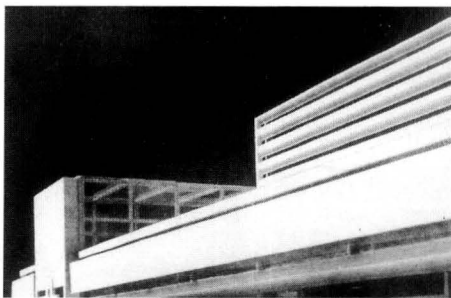
Project B, summarizing all the complementary ideas, came to existence from the precise willpower of all the members of the Group and has been freely expressed. This is definitely a collective and worthy effort that honors the whole of the Group

(and the reviews in the press can confirm this). So, the same precise, persevering, and irremovable willpower of the Group will stand against anyone who now, 3 months after the presentation, raises doubts about the inner value of one of our projects and about a situation concerning the presentation of the two projects, which was unanimously decided on (at the end of July). Therefore, I think it is necessary that the remarks on the subject contained in Vietti’s letter dated 19 October should be firmly rejected. As far as promotion for the projects is concerned, I wish to point out that, either I alone or with the Group as colleagues, have developed a campaign to illustrate our work to political and government personalities, to the press, and to art critics. The campaign has been going on since 10 August (I can forward you a detailed list).

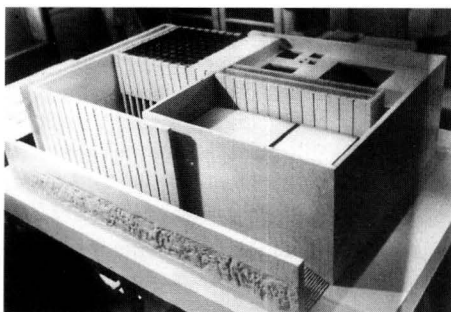
I have personally written up the report, completed in every part, and presented it in Rome for the purposes of the competition. I have undertaken the journey to Rome for the opening of the exhibition and consequent visit to Rome VIPs, etc. I believe you have done the same. I believe also that you cannot tolerate someone writing, in a patronizing way, about rebukes that you do not deserve.

I leave it with you to judge for yourself. On my side, I reckon that with the satisfaction in thinking that one of our projects could be chosen, we should feel the desire that the collaboration so truly developed so far should not disappear. On the contrary, it should be reinforced and, if necessary, protected.

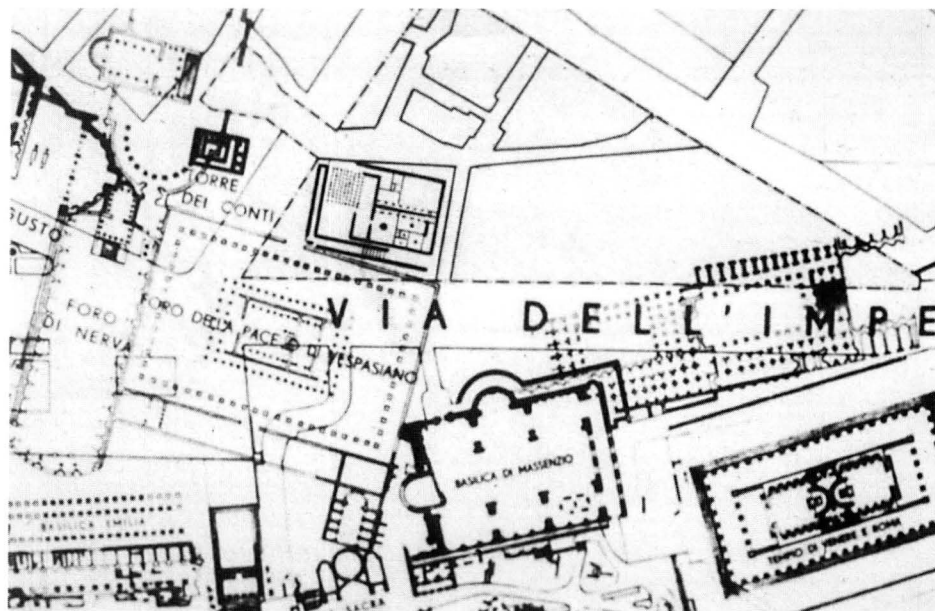
For this purpose, I wish to remind you of our commitment to



2. Palazzo Littorio Solution B, model. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.



3. Danteum, model. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.



4. Danteum, site plan. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

Project C, recently undertaken so enthusiastically a few days ago. This project will summarize all our energies and our hopes. I am confident that, after his outburst in his letter, Vietti will choose to return to our line. This is in everyone's interest.

Although in this letter he strongly reprimands Vietti for his inferences, Terragni cleverly chose not to address the letter to Vietti in particular. Instead, he diplomatically addressed it to all of the members, including Vietti, as a general call for unanimity.

Terragni's aim was to put Vietti back in his place, for both Vietti and the rest of the group, as an equal member. In Terragni's closing paragraph, he lets Vietti know that in his opinion it would be in the greater interest of everyone if Vietti were to put this recent tension behind him and enable the Group to enthusiastically continue work on Project C, which they had begun a few days before.

It is most likely that there had been a power problem with Vietti in the Group for some time. Luigi Zuccoli writes that Vietti assumed leadership of Project A and Terragni that of B (Figure 2) and this is pos-

sible.⁴ However, from Terragni's letter, if this was so, it was almost certainly after the conceptual design stage when the Group had unanimously agreed on the theoretical, ideological, and geometric concepts.

More than likely, Vietti's real concern was for the next stage of the competition. If the Group was successful and Solution A was approved, Vietti wanted to be at the head. By discrediting Solution B (which, if Zuccoli is correct, Terragni developed), Vietti's aim was to undermine Terragni's position of leadership, albeit even if only in Vietti's mind, or perhaps to cause a split in the Group. In either case, he was clearly canvassing for support in order to assume leadership of Project C.

The process of architectural design is an intriguing and complex phenomenon. The initial conceptual ideas, interpreted within a predetermined architectural language, set the spiritual meaning of the building and determine its form as the design is refined. Provided these concepts are clearly understood and the aims established, any one of the intelligent group members could have completed the scheme in its detailed planning.

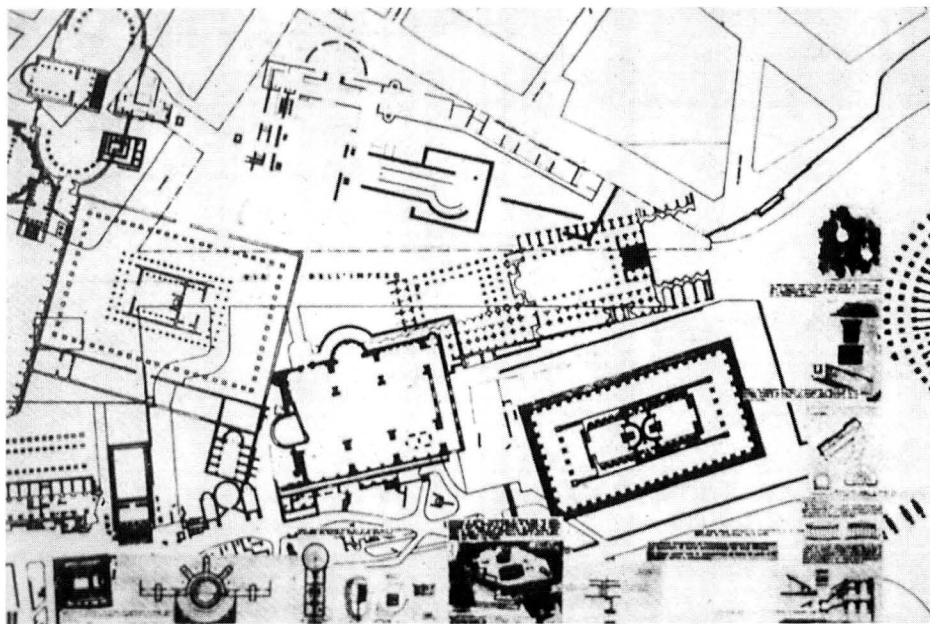
Terragni does not indicate in any way that either of the two schemes was developed by, or that its development was led by, any

one individual. However, by inference in his letter, he makes it quite clear that it would not make any significant difference to a scheme if this were so: He clearly and categorically restates for the benefit of the entire group how the spirit of each scheme, the entire concept of each scheme, and the precise role of each scheme were all issues decided on by the Group before any design development.

This still leaves open the question of influence. To establish whether Terragni was a strong influential party in the conceptual design of Solution A, we must analyze this project alongside his other projects and particularly his project for the Danteum, designed for the same site four years later.

Let us first consider the Danteum project (Figure 3), a Dante center and museum commissioned by Benito Mussolini himself to be erected in Rome to celebrate the great Italian poet. The Danteum and Solution A appear to share three fundamental principles of design philosophy:

- That a built form should physically embody an ideology
- That design is a dialogue between the physical context of the site and the invisible imprint of its historical context
- That a design should be generated from its geometric context

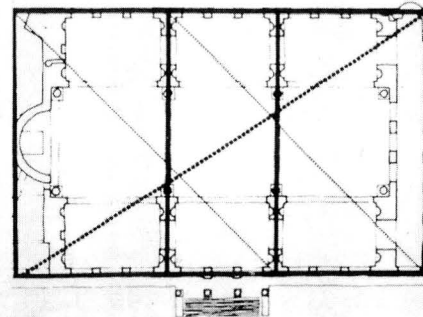


5. Palazzo Littorio Solution A, site plan. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

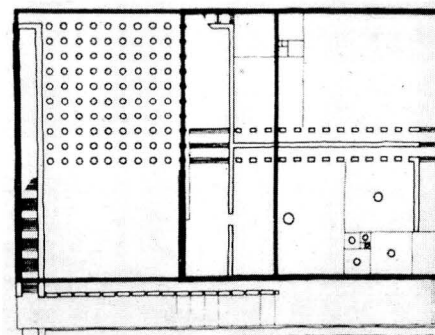
For Terragni, the first principle constituted the design brief for both the Danteum and Solution A. The design of the Danteum began with the concept of creating a building that would make physical the imperial prophecy dreamed in Dante's *Comedy* by embodying editions and iconographies of Dante in the built form. Similarly, Solution A represented the new empire of Mussolini by donning an imperial cloak of porphyry while the Sacratio was a tomb buried in the soil of Imperial Rome. Indeed, this principle was the design brief for many of Terragni's projects; it could hardly be said that he was one who kept his arguments hidden. This is reflected upon by Jose Quetglas, who remarks of Terragni's work:

An exposition of nautical sports must represent a flotilla of white sails leaning in the wind; a Casa del Fascio must represent the deployment of fascist troops on its four facades, a pavilion of state railroads must represent some gigantic rails supported by the base of the buildings; an academy of fine arts must represent a scaffolding mounted against a wall for a painting; the seat of an institute for Dante studies must be a model of the *Comedy* and of the life of its author.⁵

The influence of the second principle of design on both the Danteum and Solution A is demonstrated by the author's alignment of each project with the Forum of Trajan (Figures 4 and 5). The result of this alignment creates, with the Basilica Maxentius, a visual cone on to the Colosseum.⁶ Both schemes were presented on a base map of the site upon which the ancient forums had been superimposed. It is most likely that given the political context of both these submissions, it was deemed necessary to demonstrate that through the projects' contextual and formal response, this urban intervention responded not only to the present era, but to all eras of the Roman Empire. It is worthy of note that in the Palazzo Littorio Competition, only one other entrant, Vincenzo Fasolo, chose to refer to the map of the ancient forums.⁷ This principle of design was not held solely by Terragni; interestingly, it was also upheld by Alvar Aalto, from whom Terragni drew much inspiration. Brian L. McLaren has observed this in his discussion of place and how Aalto believed a site to be "a surface which [was] already 'written' upon, and on which his projects [would] engage in a subtle dialogue like characters in the pages of a book."⁸

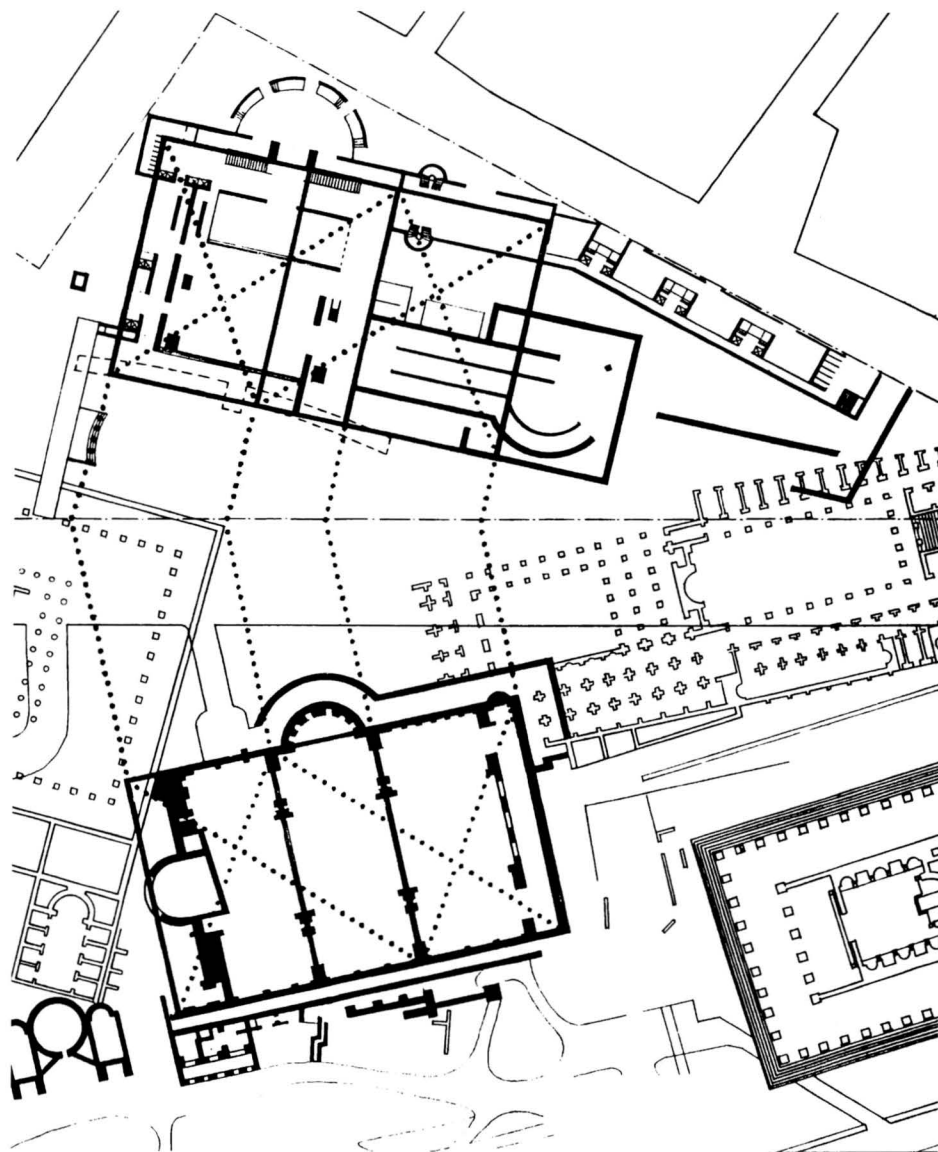


6. Basilica Maxentius, squares in plan. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.



7. Danteum, initial squares in plan before displacement. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

The influence of the third principle of design, that of contextual geometric composition, on the Danteum and on Solution A is uncannily similar. The compositional analysis carried out by Thomas Schumacher in 1985 on the Danteum illustrates the geometric relationship between the latter and the Basilica Maxentius (Figures 6 and 7).⁹ The plan of the Danteum is generated from two figures: a golden-section rectangle (the long side of which equals the short side of the Basilica Maxentius) and two overlapping squares. The plan of the Basilica Maxentius itself is composed of two overlapping squares, defined by the Basilica's structural bays, which together inscribe a golden-section rectangle. If these compositional lines are projected onto the site boundary line of via dell'Impero and then reflected in this line as if it were a mirrored plane, as in Figure 8, they form the generating lines of the plan of Solution A. The exact location of Solution A along its generating lines is such that it is equidistant with the Basilica Maxentius from the center line of the via dell'Impero, creating the "visual cone" on to the Colosseum previously mentioned.¹⁰

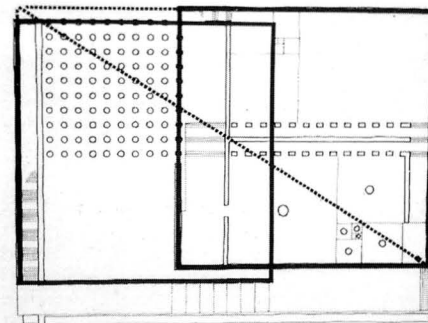


8. Basilica Maxentius and Palazzo Littorio Solution A. Compositional lines of the Basilica mirrored on the boundary line of via dell'Impero form the generating lines of the plan of Solution A.

The golden-section rectangle has a unique characteristic. Its proportions are such that it can be divided into two parts to give a square and another golden-section rectangle. The process of diminishing composition can be continued *ad infinitum*. Terragni used the golden-section rectangle because it was “one of the plan forms frequently adopted by the ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans” and ensured that “the value of ‘absolute’ geometric beauty [was imprinted] on to the entire structure of the monument.”¹¹

However, as Schumacher has demonstrated, Terragni went beyond the simple

geometry of the Basilica Maxentius. He transversely displaced the two squares by a short distance, thus defining a larger rectangle and the outer dimensions of the Danteum (Figure 9).¹² In Solution A, exactly the same compositional displacement occurs (Figure 10). The theme of overlapping squares, and in particular the slipped rectangle, is also found in a number of works by Le Corbusier that would have been widely available in published material in 1934. For example, the Villa Stein at Garches (1927) can be easily broken down into a pair of displaced squares inscribed



9. Danteum, displaced squares and golden rectangle. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

from a golden-section rectangle.¹³ Mario Radici, painter and fellow Comasco, was an explorer of the same geometric theme.¹⁴

Schumacher also shows through a zonal analysis of the Basilica Maxentius, how Terragni derived the peripheries of the Danteum.¹⁵ He shows how the Basilica Maxentius is composed of two end zones (the apsidal zone and the portico on the short side of the Basilica, and one long rear portico zone beyond the dimensions of the golden-section rectangle). When this is superimposed on the Danteum, he demonstrates how these same narrow layers of space are reflected in the plan.¹⁶ When this same process is applied to Solution A, the two end zones define the zone of vertical circulation (of the Sede del Partito and the Mostra della Rivoluzione) and locate the position of the square base of the Sacario (Figure 11). In addition, the dimensions of the Palazzo Littorio, defined by the two displaced squares, are equal to those of the Basilica Maxentius when the zone of the rear portico is included. The corresponding zone in Solution A defines the boundary to the zone of major vertical circulation of the Palazzo dei Uffici and the reflected zone defines the setting out of the curved porphyry wall (Figure 11).

Finally, when the process of diminishing composition—as referred to earlier—is applied to the Basilica Maxentius, Schumacher reveals that this is how all the major spaces of the Basilica are defined (Figure 12).¹⁷ When the same process is applied to the plan of the Danteum, again it is revealed that this is the derivation of the plan (Figure 13).¹⁸ When this process is applied

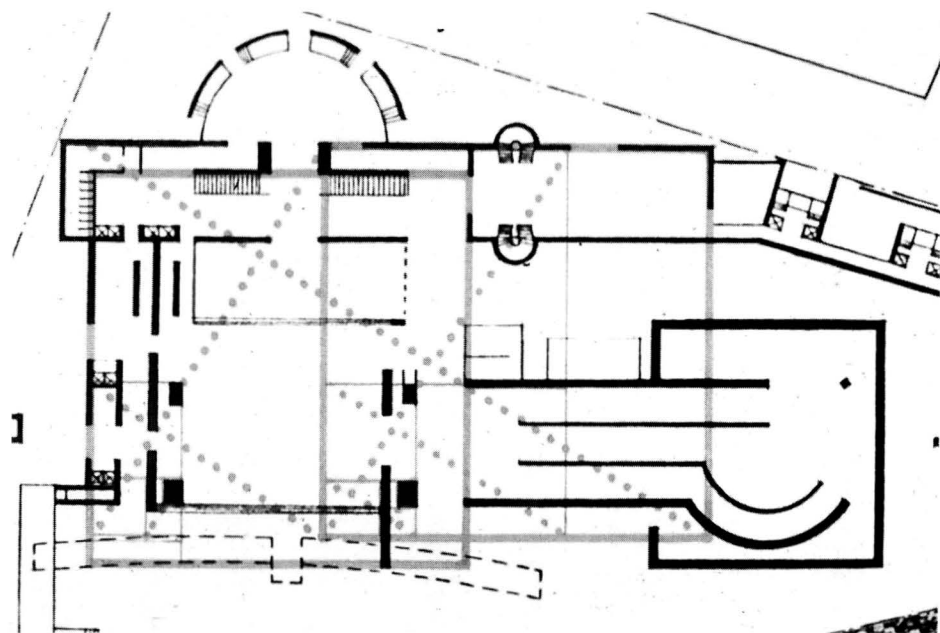
to Solution A, the results are the same, right down to the locations of the four supporting columns from which the porphyry wall is cantilevered in suspension (Figure 10).

As explained earlier, each of the three principles of design upholds a separate and distinct value and together they would appear at first to be at variance. The first principle upholds representational values, the second historicist values, and the third modernist values. Schumacher notes that “when Le Corbusier and others of his generation abandoned traditional vocabularies they never went back. Terragni tended to hedge; he designed buildings in the Classical vocabulary after he had designed buildings in the International Style.”¹⁹

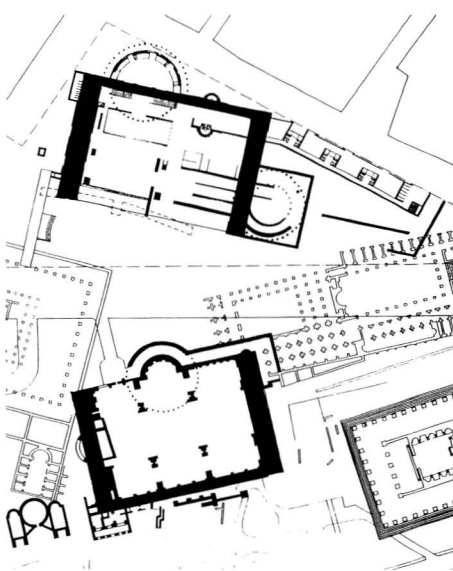
Schumacher perhaps most aptly sums up Terragni’s position when he concludes that “Terragni, ultimately, was placed—even caught—between Mediterraneanism and the Maestri Comacini myth, the one Italian and the other Galic, the one representational, the other constructive, the one nationalistic, the other international.”²⁰

When each principle is considered separately, not one can be shown to be uniquely held by Terragni. However, it is rare to find all three principles, each one to some degree supposedly at variance with the others, practiced with such rigor and brought into harmonious play in one building.

Many scholars have noted that Solution B is stylistically a project we could expect from a high rationalist such as Terragni and that Solution A is rather more eclectic and monumental in its appearance. However, Terragni was certainly capable of both eclecticism and axial composition. Possibly the best example of this is the War Memorial in Erba, Incino, Como (1928–1932) (Figure 14). Bruno Zevi records that Terragni wrote to P.M. Bardi shortly after the opening of the building, saying “in an indirect and self-critical appraisal,” “It is not



10. Palazzo Littorio Solution A, displaced squares and golden-section rectangle. Decomposition of the golden-section rectangle locates the major geometry of the plan down to the four supporting columns of the porphyry wall.



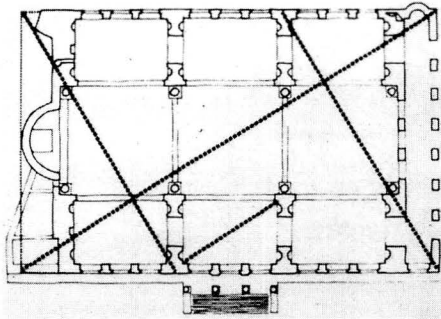
11. Basilica Maxentius and Palazzo Littorio Solution A, zonal analysis of the plan of the Basilica and its relationship to the plan of the Palazzo.

the last word from rationalism, but it is the first modern war memorial in Italy.”²¹

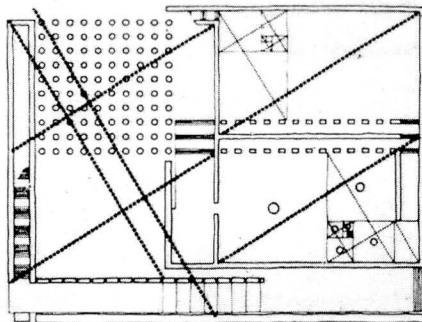
Comparing the composition of the War Memorial with that of Solution A, an axial arrangement terminating in a circle affords the latter the symbolic value of a place with respect, iconographically referenced to heaven.²² In the memorial, the inclined axial route culminates in the cylindrical structure of the crypt, partially buried in the soil. The same culmination occurs twice in

Solution A, first directly with the inclined axial route terminating in the cylindrical Sacratio that rises out of Imperial Rome, and then again in the half cylindrical form of the Sala 1000. The pivotal point of these two axes is notably the Sala del Duce.

The War Memorial at Erba has another interesting parallel with Solution A: theatrical reference. Several scholars have referred to this, most notably Manfredo Tafuri in his article “Subject and Mask” but



12. Basilica Maxentius, golden sections. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.



13. Dantéum, golden sections. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

also Daniele Vitale with reference to the War Memorial at Erba in “Reconsidering Rationalism.”²³ As Vitale rightly notes, the War Memorial was conceived as an extension and development of the neighboring Licinium Theater, designed in 1920 by Fermo Bassi, a local engineer. The simple round platform of the theater, ringed with steps and an orchestra pit, is formed in a clearing surrounded by trees and flanked by small colonnaded temples. Conceptually, the War Memorial is similar, notes Vitale. The cylindrical form of the partially sunken crypt forms a circular terrace above which one side thrusts convexly toward the town and the landscape, and the other is bounded by a contrasting concave stone exedra. In Solution A, the dramatic elements of stage and backdrop are brought back into play when the giant curvilinear curtain of porphyry, suspended, draws back to create a slot from which Mussolini will appear and rise on to the Arengario to great applause from his gathered throng.

This is not the last time we encounter the drama of positive and negative forms within the same place. Terragni explored the

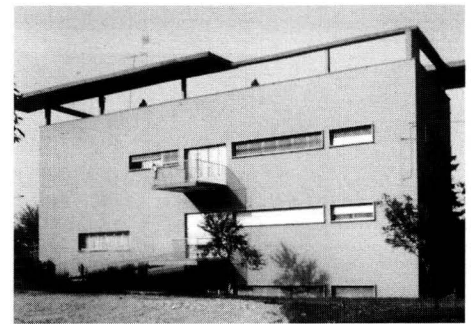


14. War Memorial, Erba, Incino, Como, 1928–1932, axial view to the Sacrarium. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

idea again, this time more fully in the Villa Bianca at Seveso (1936–1937) (Figure 15). Here the facade presented to the entrance is an asymmetrically carved solid wall brought to rest with a vertical slot dividing two volumes. A horizontal plane, this time a balcony, is slid out to mark the entrance below. The elevation of this facade is compositionally more worked, much calmer, and less aggressive than the curved porphyry wall. However, the drama of both lies in the use of the solid or plane made powerful by the negative form of the vertical slot. Terragni had been working with this theme for some years, reinventing it to solve particular problems of a project. In his Casa Rustici (1933), the vertical slot defining the two apartment volumes is closed with a screen of balconies as if to draw a veil of privacy and shade across the inner courtyard (Figure 16).

The choice of material for a building or a building element was an extremely important consideration for Terragni and is another indicator of his strong influence on the design of Solution A. He was quoted in *Quadrante*, regarding his Casa del Fascio, in 1936: “If for the functional and utilitarian purposes of an office building a plaster wall is as good as a marble wall, for the representational nature of a building only the marble wall will do.”²⁴

The specific choice of porphyry for the wall of the Palazzo Littorio in Solution A had meaning beyond the emulation of the color of the Basilica Maxentius. Porphyry has ancient iconographical significance, and its deep maroon, nearly purple, color, gave it its imperial connotations in the Late Empire.²⁵ In addition, porphyry comes from the area between the Nile and the Red Sea and was historically worked



15. Villa Bianca, Seveso, 1936–1937, rear facade. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.



16. Casa Rustici, 1933, front facade. Reproduced from Thomas L. Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol*. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

only by the Romans.²⁶ Ethiopia, not coincidentally, was invaded and conquered by Mussolini in 1935, creating once again a new Roman Empire. There could not have been a more significant symbol for Mussolini’s backdrop than a facade of pure porphyry. We must agree with Zuccoli that this move was pure Terragni.²⁷

Theoretical parallels can also be drawn between Solution A and Terragni’s approach to the design of the Casa del Fascio in its historic site in Como (begun in 1932). In both projects, the architecture of the wall was explored as a concept simultaneously both Roman and modern. In the Casa del Fascio, wall architecture is extended to envelop the Roman tradition of frame architecture, creating a thoroughly modern form that resonates between the past and the present.

In Solution A, two references are made on the drawings and in their captions to the architectural element, the wall: “La genialità costruttiva ed esecutiva dei Romani tendeva a realizzare le più grandi superfici orizzontali ed a eliminare gli ingombri dei piedritti riducendoli in pochi

essenziali.”²⁸ This caption relates to a Choisy drawing of a Roman cross vault in the Palatine, a place Terragni is likely to have visited during the competition. Here the virtual absence of columns in Solution A is legitimized through the reflection and development of ancient Roman constructional values concerning long spans and column-free spaces, as the natural conclusion to this Roman concern.

The second reference on Terragni’s drawing is incomplete in its legibility and one can only speculate as to its exact meaning: “Composizione armonica di colonne . . . di stessa importanza . . . distanza tra le colonne e . . .”²⁹ It does, however, appear to acknowledge the absence of columns in Solution A. In the accompanying drawing to this caption, the distance between the columns has been reduced to such an extent that together they act like a wall. The natural conclusion, as illustrated in Solution A, is that the columns do actually become sections of wall.

Similar parallels can be drawn with many of Terragni’s own projects, such as the Infant School Sant’Elia, Como (1936–1937), and the Danteum, Rome (1938). The philosophy underpinning all Terragni’s work, as he wrote, is simply this: “Tradition does not disappear, but changes appearance.”³⁰

In 1989, Carol Rusche asserted at the International Conference on the Architecture of Giuseppe Terragni, Levenno, that Vietti had claimed in an interview with her to be the author of Solution A and Terragni that of Solution B.³¹ From the evidence of Terragni’s letter of October 25, 1934, it would appear that Vietti had been making this same claim more than fifty years earlier. The difference today is that no other team member is alive to refute this claim as it was refuted in 1934 when Terragni did so for all of the Group.

From Terragni’s letter, it would appear that the Group had a fairly democratic

structure. Common goals were set out at an early stage. The big strategic moves in terms of the approach to the competition and the production of two complementary designs were agreed on. The issues each of the two design solutions would consider, and their respective resolutions, were all worked out by the Group and unanimously approved. Which individual actually headed the production team thereafter, if indeed one did, is largely irrelevant in terms of that individual’s influential architectural input. What is relevant is the influence of an individual within the group on the actual design process preceding this production stage.

Terragni certainly had a strong design personality, and elements of this personality are characterized in Solution A. Equally, the ideas he contributed and the design ideologies the group explored in Solution A, in turn, became generators for his later works, such as the Danteum, Infant School Sant’Elia, and the Villa Bianca.

It is not possible, nor would it be wise, to attempt to isolate each individual architectural idea or ideology and categorize either as being particular to an individual or as being widely held in a group project, in an attempt to mathematically gauge the degree of influence of an individual’s personal ideology over that of an architectural movement. The situation must be viewed instead in the context of the changing political climate at the time and must be considered on balance with all the evidence of Terragni’s work both before and following the competition entry.

Although many of the ideologies that Terragni held were equally regarded by those who supported the rationalist movement and the International Style, there are many seemingly contradictory architectural decisions that appear together in several buildings by Terragni both before and after the competition. On balance, this would lead one to the

conclusion that Terragni was not the “author” of Solution A, for Solution A was a cowritten work by the Group. However, Solution A was the result of a true collaboration on which Terragni had a strong architectural influence. This influence was a reciprocal one, and Solution A, although never built, was to reverberate in Terragni’s work for the few remaining working years of his life.³²

Notes

1. Enrico Mantero, *Giuseppe Terragni e la città del razionalismo italiano* (Rome: Dedalo, 1969), pp. 122–28.

2. Carol Rusche, “Terragni and Vietti nel concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio” (Paper presented at the International Conference on the Architecture of Giuseppe Terragni, Villa Vigoni, Levenno (10) July 11–13, 1989).

3. Mantero, *Giuseppe Terragni*, pp. 122–28. My translation.

4. Luigi Zucconi, *Quindici anni di vita e di lavoro con l’amico e maestro architetto Giuseppe Terragni* (Como: Tipografia Editrice Cesare Nani, 1981), pp. 39–42.

5. Jose Quetglas, “The Edge of Words: Prolegomena to Future Work on Terragni,” *Assemblage* 5 (Feb. 1988): 66–89.

6. Il Gruppo (Antonio Carminati, Pietro Lingeri, Ernesto Saliva, Giuseppe Terragni, Luigi Vietti, in collaboration with Marcello Nizzoli and Mario Sironi), *Corcorso nazionale per il progetto del Palazzo del Littorio e della Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista in via dell’Impero a Roma* (Milan: Societa Grafica G. Modiano, 1934), p. 3.

7. See “Concorso per il Palazzo del Littorio,” *Architettura*, Special issue 13 (1934), and *Il Nuovo Stile Littorio* (Milan-Rome: SA Arti Grafiche Bertarelli, 1936), both dedicated to the Palazzo Littorio Competition, for project documentation.

8. Brian L. McLaren, “Other Places,” *Reflections* 7 (spring 1990): 44–49.

9. Thomas L. Schumacher, *The Danteum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), pp. 79–83.

10. Il Gruppo, *Concorso nazionale*, p. 3.

11. Giuseppe Terragni, “Relazione sul Danteum,” paragraphs 3, 7, in Schumacher, *The Danteum*, pp. 96, 98.

12. Thomas Schumacher, *Surface and Symbol* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), p. 195, fig. 43.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 195, fig. 43; p. 103, fig. 45.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6, figs. 51, 53.
15. Schumacher, *The Danteum*, p. 83.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Thomas Schumacher, "Terragni and Classicism: Fence Sitting at the Barricades," *JAE* 41/4 (summer 1988):11–19.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Bruno Zevi, Giuseppe Terragni (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1980), p. 19.
22. J.E. Cirlot, A *Dictionary of Symbols*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 46–48.
23. Manfredo Tafuri, "Subject and Mask," *Lotus* 20 (Sept. 1978):4–31. Also published in *Oppositions* 11 (winter 1977):1–25. See also Daniele Vitale, "Reconsidering Rationalism," *Abitare* 278 (Oct. 1989): 238–45.
24. "La costruzione della Casa del Fascio, Como," *Quadrante* 35–36 (Oct. 1936). Translation by T. Schumacher.
25. Frank Sear, *Roman Architecture* (London: Batsford, 1989), p. 85.
26. *An Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (special publication of the Egypt Exploration Fund) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1894), p. 4. Also see Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (London: British Museum, 1986), p. 15.
27. Zuccoli, *Quindici anni*, p. 17.
28. Il Gruppo, *Concorso nazionale*, p. 9. I translate this as, "The constructional brilliance of the Romans aims at the creation of greater horizontal surfaces and the elimination of obstructing columns, reducing them to their absolute essentials."
29. *Ibid.* I translate this as, "Harmonious composition of columns and . . . of the same importance . . . distance between the columns and . . ."
30. Ellen Shapiro, "Introduction to the Gruppo Sette," reprinted in *Oppositions*, 6 (fall 1976): 86–88.
31. Rusche, "Terragni e Vietti."
32. Terragni was called into the army on September 5, 1939, and returned to Italy in 1943, where he died on July 19, 1943. The cause of death is unknown.