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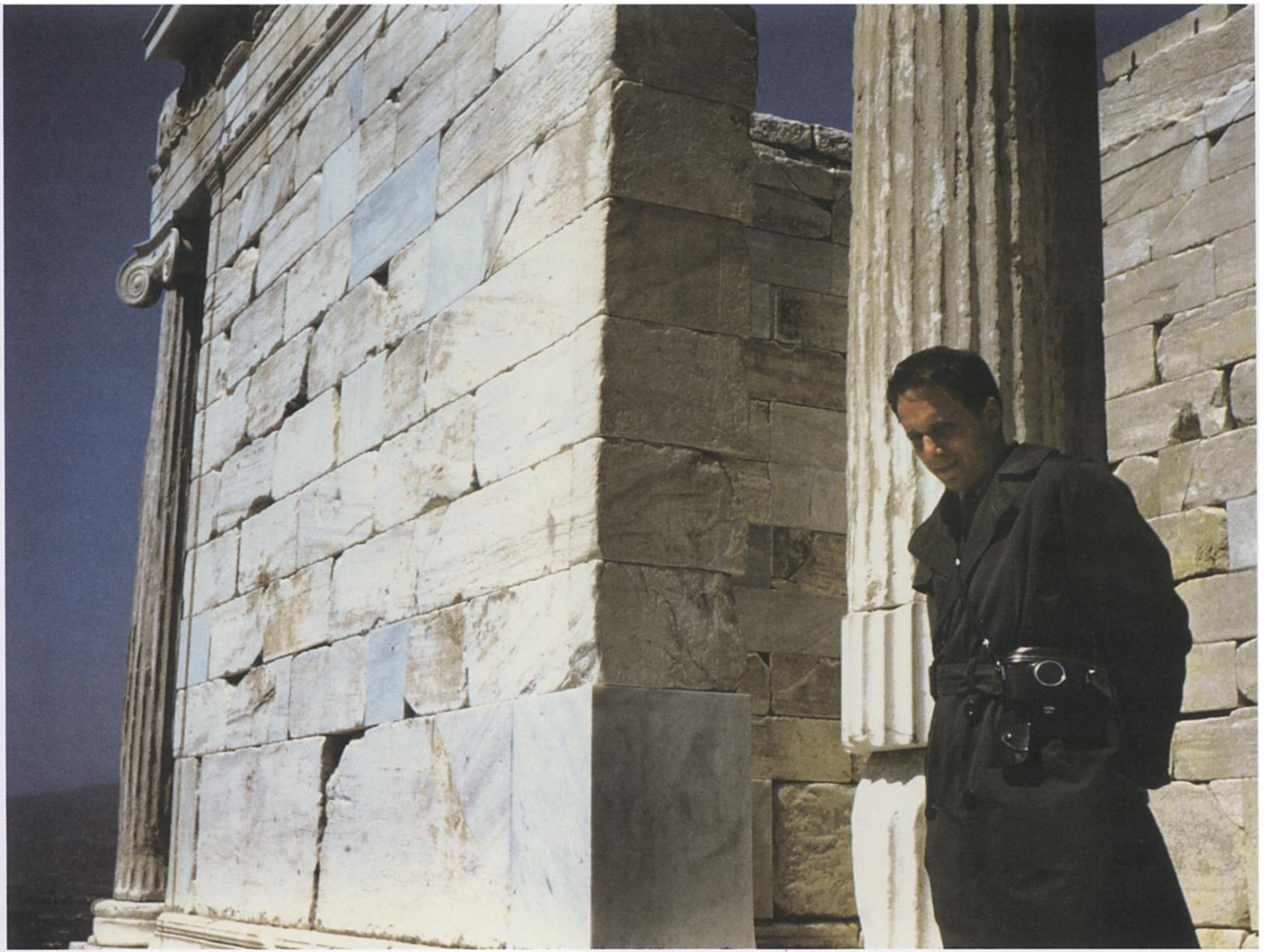
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In the Academy's Garden: Robert Venturi, the Grand Tour and the Revision of Modern Architecture

Martino Stierli

In 1966 the direction of architectural discourse was changed by two books published just a few months apart: Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città* and Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. Their simultaneity marked the climax of a crisis in architecture widely felt among a younger generation of theoreticians and practitioners. Venturi's book in particular claimed to be a manifesto (albeit a gentle one) for a new beginning. Ironically, this rhetoric of renewal was linked to a re-examination of architectural history which – at least on the surface – had been suppressed by the avant-gardes of the twentieth century. Indeed, a large number of the images reproduced in *Complexity and Contradiction* referenced the buildings of mannerism and late baroque in England and Italy.¹ Venturi's reconsideration of the canon of architectural history, however, was not intended to herald a return to the classical language of architecture, as was erroneously believed by some later protagonists of postmodernism. Rather, the point was to illustrate the existence of another tradition of architecture that had not been acknowledged by the purity and ahistoricism of late modernism – an approach against which the book was ostensibly directed.

Complexity and Contradiction thus manifested Venturi's unease with the interpretation of modern principles in contemporary architectural discourse. But beneath its iconoclasm, it also represented the intellectual digest of its author's extensive travels across Europe in the late 1940s and his two-year tenure at the American Academy in Rome between 1954 and 1956. Since Venturi characteristically refrained from sketching or taking notes on his trips, the book is in many ways a somewhat delayed collection of images, thoughts and itineraries generated by his European sojourn. By marrying architectural connoisseurship once again to architectural tourism, he resumed the earlier tradition of the grand tour, while by channelling the findings of the trip into a historically rich theory of architecture relevant to contemporary practice, he established the paradoxical nexus that has defined his position in more recent architectural history.

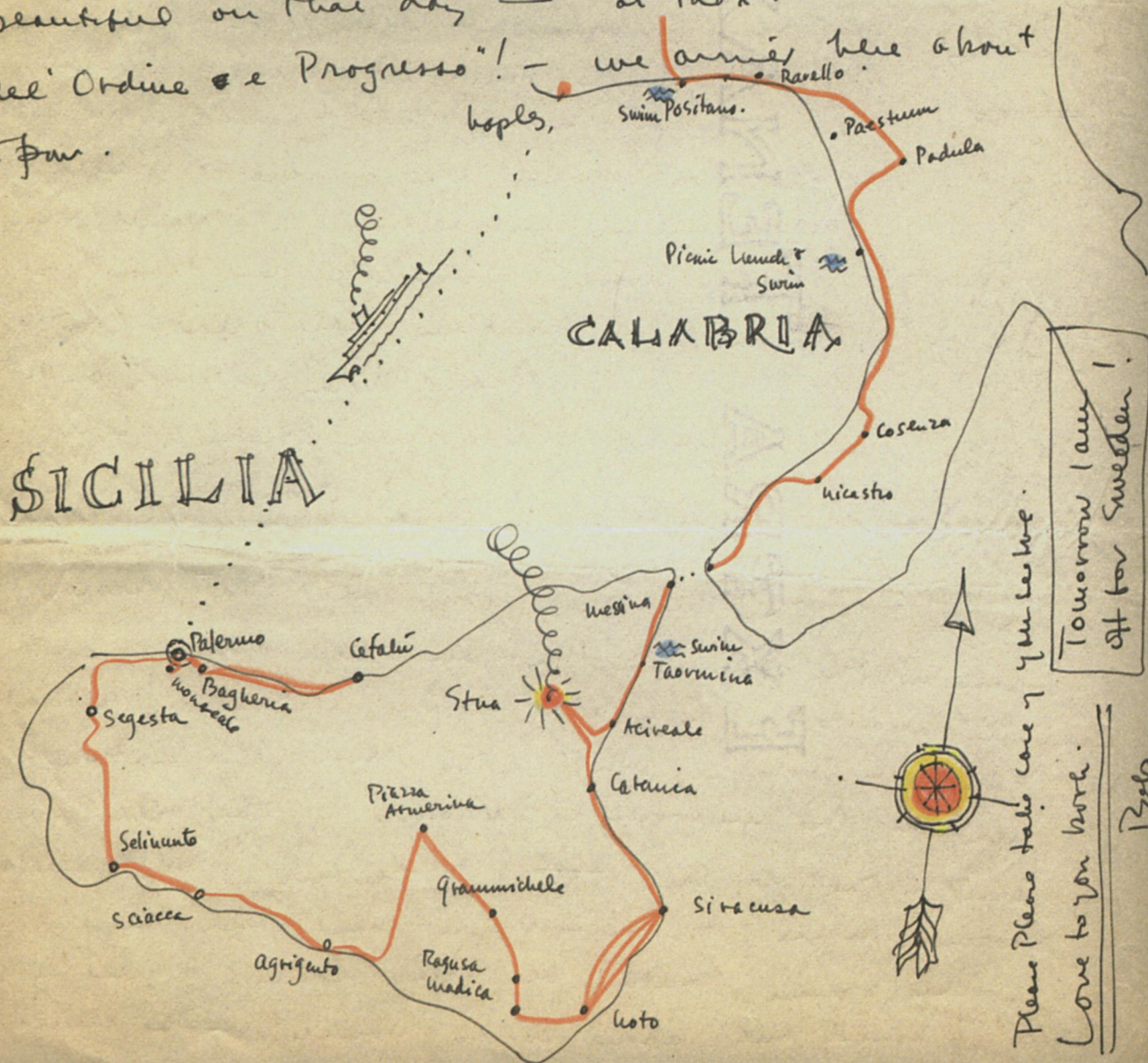
The 'grand tour' had traditionally been a perennial journey across France and Italy designed to initiate the classical education of young British aristocrats.² The term itself was first used in 1670 by Richard Lassels in his *Voyage of Italy*. By the eighteenth century, the tour had become a firm social convention for the British nobility, assuming the character and importance of a rite of passage, but by the late nineteenth century the idea of the tour itself also toured, with economically and culturally aspiring American middle classes increasingly seeing in the cities of Italy and Greece a repository for a higher form of cultural learning.

The emergence of a canon of Italian architecture was the direct result of these aristocratic grand tours; an established body of buildings and styles soon supported by European systems of architectural and artistic education. As early as 1663, the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture established the Prix de Rome and officially sanctioned the journey to Italy as a mandatory part of an artist's education, a move endorsed three years later when Jean-Baptiste Colbert founded the French Academy in Rome. As far as the US was concerned, architectural education in the nineteenth century was heavily reliant upon the European academy system. Before 1865, when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was first to introduce a course of architecture

into its curriculum, American architectural students were forced to gain their professional training abroad. It was the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris which set the standard for American architectural education well into the twentieth century. But even though the French system accorded a high status to the study of antiquity in Rome, the US lacked an institution which would have allowed talented artists and architects to spend extended periods in the city. This changed in 1897 when architect Charles Follen McKim founded the American Academy in Rome on the basis of the French model (the American School of Architecture founded in 1894 had been a precursor, but was absorbed into the Academy three years later).³ The Academy promised a high degree of social and professional prestige, and the imposing neo-renaissance structure, built in 1914 by McKim's firm McKim, Mead and White on the Janiculum, was evidence of the cultural self-conception of the institution. With the establishment of the American Academy in Rome, the tradition of the grand tour was institutionalised into American architectural education.

For the emerging generation of modern architects and designers, the architectural tour remained an important element of personal and professional education. Le Corbusier's extensive travels across Germany, central and south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean provided him with an abundance of impressions pivotal to his later work. However, the seeming paradoxical opposition of the avant-garde to the classical subjects of these tours amounted to a rejection not only of the established canon, but also of the academic institutions entrusted with its dissemination. This applied in particular to the Prix de Rome and its international equivalents. While in his manifesto *Vers une architecture* Le Corbusier acknowledged the importance of Rome by dedicating a whole section of his book to the city, his opinion regarding the educational value of a Roman tour was much less favourable: 'The lesson of Rome is for wise men, for those who know and can appreciate, who can resist and can verify. Rome is the damnation of the half-educated. To send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life. The Grand Prix de Rome and the Villa Medici are the cancer of French Architecture.'⁴ Le Corbusier's statement rendered the Academy and the educational model for which it stood incompatible with the aims of the avant-garde. The more the architecture of modernism became the international standard, the more the Academy seemed passé. This applied to the American Academy as well, which could only claim a marginal position in American architectural education after the Second World War. Venturi has retrospectively commented on this situation: 'The Academy was known in the architectural community generally but it was not fashionable because of the pure modernist ideology of the time . . . Neither Frank Lloyd Wright nor Le Corbusier would have gone.'⁵ Even in the modernist-minded 1950s, however, the Academy was not as unpopular as Venturi's statement suggests. Louis Kahn had been there as an 'Architect in Residence' in the winter of 1950–51,⁶ and Venturi had to apply three times before finally receiving a two-year scholarship in 1954.⁷ Furthermore, its postwar activities were not in the reactionary mould that Le Corbusier had ascribed to the French Academy in the 1920s. The institution counted on the personal responsibility of each fellow and hardly prescribed any mandatory activities. The fellows were

and most interesting thing about it to an architect,
besides its amazing vistas & lengthy arcades, is a
great staircase - very daring & dynamic structurally
& spatially - The quintessence of Baroque. I took
many, many, photos here. Our pensione in Positano
was delightful & after a swim on the beach in the
morning (and an attempt to visit Roberto Mangi at his
house there - he was at home) we set off for Rome
and after a brief lunch in Naples which looked so
beautiful on that day - at the ^{little} "Ristorante
del Ordine e Progresso"! - we arrived here about
5 pm.



Title page: Robert Venturi photographed while visiting the Acropolis, Greece, c. 1955.

Above: Sketch by Robert Venturi, included in a letter he sent to his parents on 12 June 1955, showing the itinerary of his visit to Calabria and Sicily.

free to choose between attending lectures, discussions and outings in various fields of study. In this liberal climate, Venturi could largely follow his own interests.

Venturi's lack of reservations about the Academy mainly came out of his own education at Princeton University between 1944 and 1950. Its school of architecture at the time differed significantly from other elite universities in that it attached great importance to the historical education of its students, insisting on mandatory courses in art and architectural history from the department of art and archaeology. In fact, Princeton had largely resisted the realignment of American architectural education according to the example of the Bauhaus. The curriculum of the 'Princeton System', as it was called, was 'based on the belief that an architect should have a well-rounded education in liberal studies, [and] that he should understand and appreciate the other arts in their relation to architecture.'⁸ The strong ties of the Princeton school of architecture to the Academy system were demonstrated by the fact that its studios were overseen by Jean Labatut, who had been trained in Paris in the atelier of Victor Laloux. In addition to Donald Drew Egbert's course on the history of modern architecture (the importance of which Venturi has readily acknowledged⁹), the curriculum of the school gave particularly broad space to Italian art history. This emphasis on history made Princeton look *démodé* in the postwar intellectual climate, yet at the same time it explains Venturi's predisposition for the American Academy as well as his openness towards the study of historic architecture, with which he had familiarised himself in the classroom by way of slides and books.

Endorsing this historicism, Venturi travelled to Europe for the first time in the summer of 1948. This trip lasted two months with stops in England, France and Italy, and served a primarily educational purpose (as Venturi stated in a report written after his return to the US in the autumn: '[T]he approach to my travels and investigations was architectural'¹⁰). After arriving on a transatlantic liner at Liverpool, he travelled on to London. Apart from the capital, Venturi visited Oxford and Cambridge, John Vanbrugh's Blenheim Palace, the cathedrals of Ely and Salisbury, Winchester, Eton, Windsor, Kew Gardens and Hampton Court. After ten days in England, he arrived in Paris on 20 July. From there, he toured the cathedrals of Ile de France as well as the châteaux of Versailles, Fontainebleau, Blois and Chambord. As for modern architecture, he visited Auguste Perret's church at Raincy as well as several buildings by Le Corbusier, including the Villa Savoye at Poissy, the Cité de Refuge and the Swiss Pavilion in the Cité Universitaire. The third and final leg of the tour was Rome, where Venturi arrived on 8 August 1948. During his month-long stay in Italy he also visited the cities of Perugia, Assisi, Florence, Siena, Bologna, Ravenna, Venice, Padova, Vicenza and Milan. His impressions of the first day in Rome were the beginning of what he later called an 'extremely emotional love affair'¹¹ (a sentiment supported by the fact that he still regularly celebrates the anniversary of his first day in Rome). What particularly struck Venturi was the quality of the colours, the 'golden air of Rome', as he called it later, referencing Henry James, who had travelled to Rome several times between 1869 and 1909 and who had decisively formed the literary image of Europe in the US.¹² The effect of colour was all the more striking as Venturi had until

then only seen the city in black and white through photographs in books and slide presentations. Other than these earlier lecture images, his view of the city was guided by Sigfried Giedion's interpretation of the baroque urban space in *Space, Time, and Architecture*, by the Rome chapter in Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* and by his copy of the *Baedeker* travel guide. Like any tourist, his vision of the old world was thus informed by preconceived images and clichés designed for consumption by a mass-cultural as well as an architecturally interested audience.

The impact of these first impressions proved to be lasting. Soon after his return to the US in the autumn of 1948, Venturi applied for a two-year fellowship at the American Academy, and after two failed applications, he eventually succeeded in gaining a place at the end of October 1954.¹³ The liberal climate of the Academy allowed him to continue his project of a thorough travelling investigation of the architecture of Europe. He acquired his own car shortly after arrival, and in a first trip in January 1955 he revisited Paris; a few days later, he travelled to Atessa, the town of origin of his father's family. The whole month of April was spent in Egypt, Greece and Turkey, in the company of architect James Gresham and his wife. Among the sites visited were the Peloponnesus, some of the Aegean islands and Istanbul. After spending most of May in Rome working on a design project, Venturi travelled for around ten days to Sicily, accompanied by two fellow residents at the Academy, painter Alan Gussow and archaeologist Virginia Calahan. Visits were made to the most famous cities and sights such as Palermo, Monreale and the temple of Segesta, whose isolated setting in the landscape Venturi recorded in a sketch. They went on to tour Agrigento and the baroque towns of Ragusa, Modica and Noto. A last trip before leaving for Philadelphia for the summer was charged with driving the car of Carl Milles, a Swedish sculptor who had also stayed at the American Academy, back to Stockholm. On this occasion, Venturi was joined by architect Warren Peterson and painter Jack Zajac.

For his second year at the Academy, Venturi did not return to Rome until the end of December. A trip to Naples with various stops in smaller towns along the way bridged the gap before he left for another extended journey in February 1956. This time the destination was the Iberian peninsula. On his way, Venturi visited Pisa, Genoa, Nice and Le Corbusier's newly built Unité d'Habitation in Marseille – again revealing his appreciation of the architect's work – before arriving in Barcelona. Here, the work of Antoni Gaudí was the main focus of attention.¹⁴ The journey south was continued by way of Murcia to Andalusia, where Venturi sought out, in particular, the cathedrals of Seville and Córdoba. Further stops included La Coruña, Salamanca and, on the way back, Biarritz and Toulouse. After returning to Rome, another trip led to Turin, the then recently finished Ronchamp chapel in the French Jura mountains and Venice. In the second half of May 1956, Venturi travelled to southern Germany to study late baroque and rococo architecture, this time accompanied by Academy fellows Norman Neuerburg and Charles Brickbauer. Several traces of this trip can be found within *Complexity and Contradiction*, such as the images of the churches of Vierzehnheiligen and Neresheim by Balthasar Neumann and the pilgrimage church at Birnau. A last trip to the Gulf of Naples marked the end of his two-year fellowship and the conclusion of his grand

tour, the lessons of which he was to directly channel into *Complexity and Contradiction*, largely written in the years immediately after his return but not published until 1966.¹⁵

Venturi's partitioned grand tour and his sojourn at the American Academy were significant in anticipating the postmodern disposability of the whole imagery of architectural history. Yet Venturi's travel experiences also provide the origin of a number of key concepts of his own theoretical positions. Primarily, this applies to his appreciation of baroque architecture. In a summary of his trip in the summer of 1948, Venturi justified his bias for Rome with the words: 'I enjoy baroque, and therefore I was especially happy in Rome'.¹⁶ This applied in particular to the concept of the enclosed piazza, an urban element he distinguished favourably from the more open French *place*: 'The Italian concept; urban interior space is to be lived in – not just travelled through from one enclosed (bldg.) space to another. Therefore the concept for exterior space is more enclosed, different from the Parisian nineteenth-century concept as seen in boulevards.'¹⁷ In this, Venturi's preference was informed by Camillo Sitte's *Der Städtebau*, to which he referred both in his report and his letters home, and by Giedion's *Space, Time, and Architecture*, a set text at Princeton which accorded ample space to baroque architecture and urbanism. Later, travelling through Sicily, Venturi was especially thrilled by baroque city foundations such as Noto: 'What a great experience to see an entirely baroque town designed + executed all at once – in one stroke – with beautiful detail + golden masonry'.¹⁸ On this trip, Venturi had also visited the classic sites of antiquity, but his preferences clearly lay elsewhere. During his stay at the American Academy, the German art historian Richard Krautheimer, then scholar in residence, further nourished the young architect's interest in baroque architecture. At his instigation, Venturi participated in at least one tour to the various baroque churches of Rome. It was also Krautheimer who advised Venturi and his colleagues to undertake a trip to southern Germany in order to study late-baroque architecture.¹⁹ Venturi later explicitly acknowledged Krautheimer's role in his personal education in the second edition of *Complexity and Contradiction*.²⁰

Baroque and mannerist architecture in *Complexity and Contradiction* were not promoted as a pool of architectural forms to be drawn on, but as the exemplary embodiment of an anti-classical architecture and the abstract idea of a complex and contradictory aesthetic order. This applied in particular to the question of how baroque architecture mediated the spatial needs of the inside and outside of a building. According to Venturi, this principle was lacking in modernist architecture, where the exterior was primarily conceived as the expression of the functional needs within. The clear differentiation between inside and outside was to become a central aspect of Venturi's architectural thinking. It quickly came to work in tandem with the concept of contextualism and the idea that a building's exterior had to respond to the physical (and cultural) context of its given urban surroundings.²¹ In *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), written in collaboration with Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Venturi developed the idea of a clear separation between the functional interior structure and the detached facade – a facade that responded to its context and 'communicated' with its onlookers – into the full-blown theory of the 'decorated shed' (a concept that was

defined exactly by this separation, and which, with little irony, was dismissed as facadism by Venturi's critics).

The notion of the decorated shed, henceforth the signature trope of Venturi's architectural vernacular, emerged as early as the mid-1950s, during his tenure at the American Academy in Rome. Unlike 'complexity', however, its lineage cannot be traced back solely to the baroque. Writing to his parents about a visit to the Egyptian temple of Edfu, Venturi reflected on the relevance of historical architecture: 'One thing I learned from it is that Egyptian architecture is not the heavy, pompous, humourless + fascist kind that I had pictured . . . There are so many things about it relevant to my architecture thinking today.' Having seen the site of Karnak, he underscored this point: 'I am convinced that seeing + knowing these buildings is helping me very much as an architect.'²² By introducing into *Complexity and Contradiction* one of his own photographs of Karnak, Venturi clarified the relevance of these buildings to his understanding of architecture, pointing out the motif of 'things within things' and 'doors within doors'.²³ The motif appeared analogously in his design for the North Penn Visiting Nurses' Association Headquarters of 1961. Here, the window openings on the ground floor feature broad wooden profiled frames that articulate the contradiction between interior and exterior scales. Accordingly, the street facade of the building was a first step towards its emancipation from the generic structural box. Traces of an interest in urban context can also be found from his time at the Academy in the form of a letter he wrote after returning from his 1955 'Voyage d'Orient' to Egypt and Greece: 'We architects found Egypt fabulous, the Moslem architecture in Cairo, + the village architecture as well as the ancient stuff. Greece of course was wonderful, but it can't compare with Italy, where every village is a masterpiece of art, for quantity + often richness.'²⁴ These reveries hint at an insight made by Vincent Scully in his introduction to *Complexity and Contradiction*, which explains the fundamental differences between Le Corbusier and Venturi in terms of their respective architectural ideals:

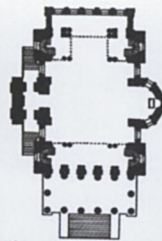
Le Corbusier's great teacher was the Greek temple, with its isolated body white and free in the landscape, its luminous austerities clear in the sun . . . Venturi's primary inspiration would seem to have come from the Greek temple's historical and archetypal opposite, the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life: not primarily sculptural actors in vast landscapes but complex spatial containers and definers of streets and squares.²⁵

It was not only the historicism of ancient and baroque architecture that Venturi explored on his travels through Italy and Europe; modern and contemporary buildings also featured prominently in his tours across the continent. In *Complexity and Contradiction* this is evidenced most clearly in frequent references to the work of his two personal heroes, Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto (whose buildings Venturi saw for himself only some years later, following the award of a travel grant from the US State Department in 1965). Contemporary Italian architecture, on the other hand, is hardly referred to at all. This is surprising given the fact that in Italy at that time there existed a vibrant and, with hindsight, highly significant architectural scene. Many of its debates were based on issues that Venturi would later come to be associated with. Foremost among these were the intense architectural discussions that developed out of Italy's

gridlike ribs in the ceiling indicate a multidirectional structure as much like a dome as a vault. Hagia Sophia in Istanbul is equivocal in a similar way. Its central dome on the square bay with pendentives implies a central type church, but its two apses with half-domes begin to set up a longitudinal axis in the tradition of the directional basilica. The horseshoe plan of the Baroque and neo-Baroque opera house focuses on the stage and the center of the auditorium. The central focus of the elliptical plan is usually reflected in the ornamental ceiling pattern and the enormous central chandelier; the focus toward the stage in the directional distortion of the ellipse and partitions between the surrounding boxes as well as in the interruption of the stage itself, of course, and the seating in the pit. This reflects the dual focus in the program of the gala theatre: the performance and the audience.

Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (26) abounds in ambiguous manifestations of both-and. The almost equal treatment of the four wings implied in the plan suggests a Greek cross, but the wings are distorted toward a dominant east-west axis, thus suggesting a Latin cross, while the fluid continuity of the walls indicates a distorted circular plan. Rudolf Wittkower has analyzed similar contradictions in section. The pattern of the ceiling in the articulations of its complex mouldings suggests a dome on pendentives over the crossing of a Greek cross (27). The shape of the ceiling in its overall continuity distorts these elements into parodies of themselves, and suggests rather a dome generated from an undulating wall. These distorted elements are both continuous and articulated. At another scale, shape and pattern play similarly contradictory roles. For example, the profile of the Byzantine capital (28) makes it seem continuous, but the texture and vestigial patterns of volutes and acanthus leaves articulate the parts.

The pedimented porch of Nicholas Hawksmoor's St. George, Bloomsbury (29), and the overall shape of its plan (30) imply a dominant axis north and south. The west entrance and tower, the interior configuration of balconies, and the east apse (which contained the altar) all suggest an equally dominant counter axis. By means of contrary elements and distorted positions this church expresses both the contrasts between the back, front, and sides of the Latin cross plan and the duo-directional axes of a Greek cross plan. These contradictions, which resulted from particular



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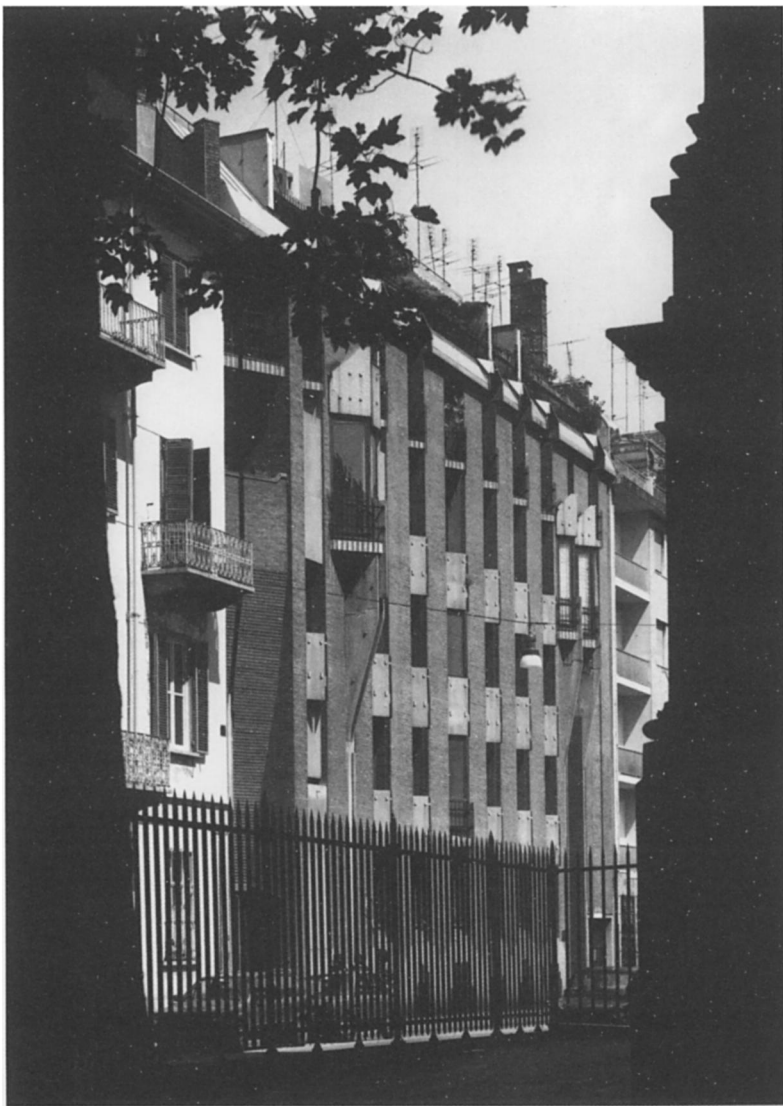
Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York in association with

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Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture

Robert Venturi

The cover of the first edition of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, published by the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1966, and a representative spread from the first edition, illustrating the graphic layout of text and images.



Clockwise from top left: Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, Bottega d'Erasmus, Turin, 1953–56; Ignazio Gardella, Casa alle Zattere, Venice, 1954–58; BPR (Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers), Torre Velasca skyscraper, Milan, 1950–51, construction completed in 1958; Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi (project managers), Carlo Aymonino, Carlo Chiarini, Mario Fiorentino, Federico Gorio, Maurizio Lanza, Sergio Lenci, Piero Maria Lugli, Carlo Melograni, Giancarlo Menichetti, Giulio Rinaldi and Michele Valori, INA-Casa quarter on Via Tiburtina, Rome, 1949–54.

pressing need to supply affordable housing in the wake of its fascist period and economic slump of the 1940s. The government reacted to this crisis by creating the Gestione INA-Casa, a programme that directed money from welfare services into social housing and which shaped the face of much of Italian housing in the 1950s and the country's architecture in general. The legal basis for the programme was the *legge Fanfani* of 1949, which included specific design recommendations. Implicitly criticising the modernist principles of rationalisation and standardisation, the law called for an urbanism evoking spontaneity and 'genuineness' and argued against monotony and repetition. The result was *neorealismo*,²⁶ an architectural movement based on an informal and picturesque organisation of the plan and on variety and the use of traditional materials in its detailing, as exemplified in the Tiburtino complex in Rome (1954). Explicitly offered as a regressive utopia empowered by the tastes and values of the man-in-the-street, its pseudo-rural vernacular was intended for residents who had relocated to the city from Italy's depopulating countryside.

As the 1950s progressed, Italian architects were increasingly confronted with the issues around historicism and building in historically sensitive urban areas. The established response became one of integrating new building into the existing urban tissue by means of formal adaptation. This strategy, which became known as neo-liberty, was taken as a general turn towards historicism, particularly in the international context. Its protagonists became the target of vehement criticism, causing a polemical debate that brought Italian architecture to the forefront of international discourse.²⁷ Within Italy, the debate had first crystallised around the Bottega d'Erasmus apartment house in Turin. Its architects, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, presented the building in the May 1957 issue of the influential *Casabella continuità* with a call for a 'Commitment to tradition'. Although Ernesto Rogers' editorial countered this provocation,²⁸ Reyner Banham subsequently accused contemporary Italian architecture of a 'retreat from modern architecture'.²⁹ The debate continued at the CIAM conference at Otterlo in 1959.³⁰ Here, criticism was directed against buildings such as Ignazio Gardella's Casa alle Zattere in Venice and the Torre Velasca in Milan by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Rogers (BPR). Both structures paid tribute to their physical context by reinterpreting the formal repertoire of their surroundings. Retrospectively, in his 1977 *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, Charles Jencks located the contribution of neo-liberty architects at the roots of 'historicism', one of six (characteristically Jencksian) branches in his family tree of postmodernism. Jencks also identified what he saw as a distinct parallel between Venturi's historicism and Italian architecture of the 1950s and 1960s.³¹

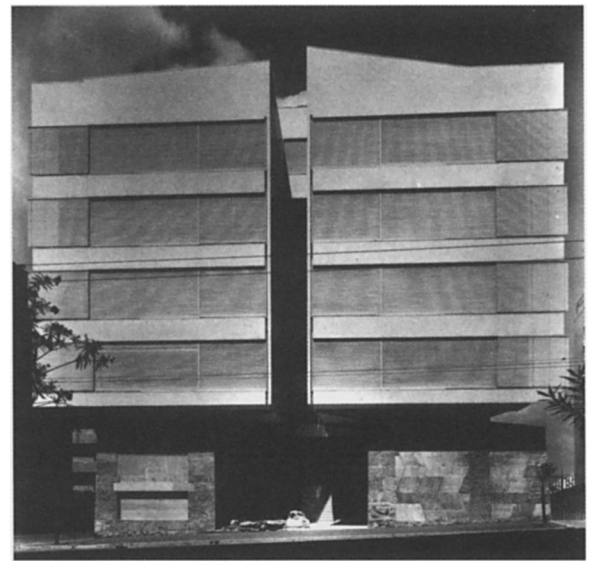
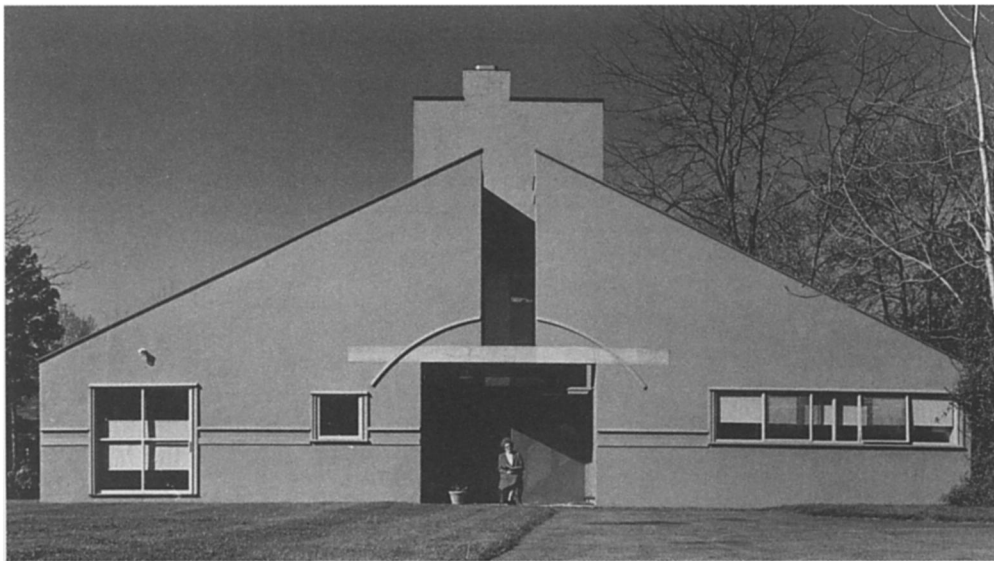
Venturi himself never accorded contemporary Italian architecture more than a marginal role in the genesis of his architectural thinking. However, he was not only aware of the Italian architectural scene during his years spent at the Academy, he also mingled with a number of its key protagonists. The Milan-based architect Ernesto Rogers arguably left the deepest mark on Venturi's intellectual development. In the first year that he spent at the Academy, Rogers was charged with supervising 'a collaborative project for the fine arts fellows . . . the theme being the use of the Academy's garden for

additional studios'.³² Venturi was one of the fellows involved in this design project. As a frequent presence at the Academy, Rogers quickly became both mentor and guide to the young American. In a letter to his parents in February 1955, Venturi wrote: 'The nicest news is that Ernesto Rogers has read my paper . . . and might publish it in his magazine 'Casabella'! . . . [O]n Sunday we architects + Rogers took an interesting trip to the town of Tarquinia . . . Tomorrow night we architects + Rogers are having dinner with Perisutti [sic]'.³³ After his return from Rome in 1956, Venturi attested to the importance of Rogers' companionship in a letter written to the Academy's Board of Trustees: 'After having completed my last term as a Fellow in Architecture, I find myself resisting my usual disinclination to write a letter . . . I consider my associations and my travels and discoveries made possible by the fellowship, the richest experience of my life . . . I owe a particular debt to Ernesto Rogers there, for his friendship and his introduction to the best of current Italian architecture.'³⁴

Rogers himself was one of the most prominent figures in Italian architectural discourse in the 1950s, as editor of the country's most important architectural magazine. In the 1930s *Casabella* had served as the mouthpiece for *razionalismo*; the epithet 'continuità' (added to the magazine's title with its relaunch in 1953 under Rogers) signalled a return to this tradition. However, at the same time, the genesis of a more detached position can also be traced in Rogers' editorials – an ambivalence that anticipates central aspects of Venturi's later revisions of modernism.

Rogers' departure from modernist dogma was first publicly articulated in an editorial from 1954 entitled 'The responsibilities towards tradition'. Although the title was ambiguous in the sense that 'tradition' referred both to *razionalismo* and to historical architecture, Rogers singled out modernist formalism as the predominant threat to contemporary architecture: '[T]he most dangerous formalism is that of the moderns, who fail to realise that the modern style contrasts with the old precisely because it has laid the groundwork for a dynamic approach to problems.'³⁵ Rogers subsequently developed a proto-contextualist understanding of architecture which was based on a reinterpretation of the concept of functionalism: '[F]unctionalism is not only the finest means of expressing every construction according to its specific character, but also of adapting every building to the problems of its site and its cultural situation.'³⁶ Thus for Rogers, a truly functionalist architecture did not stop with spatial and structural considerations; it also had to take into consideration existing external factors such as the physical and cultural context. Following Rogers' lead, by the late 1950s several Italian architects had distanced themselves from this 'modernist formalism' and had turned to history and the tissue of the city as points of reference, in turn pushing the debate on neo-liberty onto a national and international stage.

However, Rogers' revision was not intended as a break from modernism but rather as the re-examination of its very aims. The ensuing ambiguity of his position closely resembles a characteristic trait in the architectural thinking of Venturi, whose stance equally is one of simultaneous alliance and dissociation from the established tenets of modernism. Thus in *Complexity and Contradiction*, he argues against 'orthodox modern architects' such as Mies van der Rohe, whose 'less is more' edict is subverted into the pithy 'less is a bore',



Clockwise from top left: Detail of the temple at Karnak, photograph by Robert Venturi, from the second edition of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 1977; Venturi and Short, North Penn Visiting Nurses' Association Headquarters, Ambler, Pennsylvania, 1961; Luigi Moretti, Casa del Girasole, Rome, 1947–50; Venturi and Rauch, Trubek and Wislocki Houses, Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, 1970; Ludovico Quaroni, Federico Gorio, Michele Valori, Piero Maria Lugli and Luigi Agati, 'La Martella' village in Matera, 1951–54; Venturi and Short, Vanna Venturi House, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, 1961.

while praising the complexity of the interior of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye.³⁷ The similarities extend further: Rogers' expansion of the concept of functionalism to include history and context was later paralleled by Venturi both in theory and practice,³⁸ as was the acceptance of these two points of reference as decisive forces in the design process. As we have seen, Venturi was present in Italy and in contact with Rogers when these issues first surfaced in Italian architectural debates. The correspondences between Rogers and Venturi can therefore hardly be dismissed as coincidental, with the Italian revision of modernist principles anticipating Venturi's own critique of the movement. In this way, the figure of Venturi provides the missing and direct link between Italian historicism in the 1950s and the contextualist turns of architectural postmodernism in the 1970s.

Another key figure in the Italian scene of the 1950s was the Rome-based architect Luigi Moretti. Independently of Rogers, Moretti worked on his own revision of the rationalist tradition, and like Venturi, he was a great admirer of the baroque.³⁹ And significantly, whereas Venturi hardly credited the majority of his Italian contemporaries with any significant impact on his own architectural thinking, he never made a secret of his admiration for Moretti. Venturi discussed his Casa del Girasole (1950) in *Complexity and Contradiction*⁴⁰ and later called it 'one of the most inspiring buildings of my life'.⁴¹ Indeed, the direct influence of this building can be traced in a number of Venturi's own designs, the most obvious being the Vanna Venturi House. The broken pediments on both Venturi's and Moretti's facades are the most striking correspondence resonant of the tympanum of the Greek temple. Both houses reintroduced the concept of symmetry in the facade, a device foreign to modernist architectural iconography, in which the outer appearance of a building was to mirror the logic of the interior. In this sense, modernist 'design from within' was replaced by design simultaneously from within and without. In both cases, however, the symmetry is gently broken: while Moretti in his Casa del Girasole altered the heights of the two vestigial gables, Venturi placed the chimney off the central axis. Moreover, both facades were reduced to a planar surface; they are only thin screens, placed in front of the structure almost like a billboard. A radicalisation of this concept can be found in Venturi's Guild House, where the facade appears screen-like and untectonic, hardly more than a two-dimensional image applied to a structure.

Venturi took the chance to further explore the contemporary Italian scene in the second year of his Rome residency. In a letter posted in Nice, he wrote: 'This AM in Genoa we saw some fine modern architecture by the architect Albini.'⁴² Franco Albini's work must have spurred Venturi's interest, as the group stopped again at Genoa on the way back to visit 'a very fine museum' by the same architect. Venturi was probably referring to the Palazzo Bianco (1951),⁴³ which in Manfredo Tafuri's words 'immediately became a necessary point of reference' in Italian architecture.⁴⁴ Albini's museum conversion would have offered an exemplary modern intervention in a historical building, in which art pieces were abstracted from the architecture and presented as ethereally floating objects in space. An undated handwritten memo in Venturi's papers, featuring a list of architects and their most important works demonstrates his

interest in current Italian architecture. The note, which may have served as a sightseeing itinerary for Milan, lists a number of modern buildings, among them the housing development at Cesate (1954) by Albini, Gianni Albricci, BPR and Gardella; BPR's Monument to the Dead in the Concentration Camps of Germany at the Cimitero Monumentale (1946); Giuseppe Terragni and Pietro Lingeri's Casa Rustici (1935); Gardella's pavilion for contemporary art at the Milan Gallery of Modern Art (1954), and BPR's apartment building on via Borgonuovo (1948). Finally, in a letter to his parents written towards the end of his stay at the Academy, Venturi wrote: 'Chuck Brickbauer and I had a nice drive in his open car through the outskirts of Rome visiting examples of modern architecture, and recording it for Lawrence [sic] Roberts who wanted such a list.'⁴⁵ Laurance P Roberts was president of the Academy, and apparently he considered Venturi and his colleague such experts on modern architecture in Rome that he asked them to prepare a guide for future fellows. The survey, however, remained uncompleted.

As much as their buildings, Venturi's residency at the American Academy in Rome also gave him the opportunity to make contact with Italian architects themselves. The principal occasion for this was the series of lectures organised by the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU), initiated in 1953 in collaboration with the American Fulbright Commission. Each attendant – including Venturi – received a number of volumes on Italian architecture and urbanism, a list of the most important modern structures in Rome and other cities, a similar list with the addresses of contemporary Italian architects and a list of libraries specialising in art history.⁴⁶ Venturi remembers having heard Pier Luigi Nervi – whom he had the chance to meet at a lunch held at the house of the director of the Academy in January 1956 – and Luigi Moretti. In his personal correspondence he also mentioned lectures by Giancarlo De Carlo, Riccardo Morandi (who showed an audience two of his factory projects on the outskirts of Rome), Paolo Chelazzi (whose ideas Venturi compared to those of Louis Kahn), Luigi Piccinato (who presented his planning in Siena and the Matera region, prompting Venturi to call him a 'great Italian city planner') and Vittorio Gandolfi.⁴⁷

Among the lectures presented within the INU series, a presentation by Ludovico Quaroni must have been of particular interest to Venturi, because he retained a typewritten copy of it, including a list of the main works of the architect, among them the La Martella development and the Tiburtino district of Rome, two key pieces of Italian *neorealismo*.⁴⁸ There is no direct evidence that Venturi saw either of the two sites, but his written account of nearby Matera (in which he pointed out the 'sordidness yet beauty and architectural interest . . . and the wonderful spatial relationships there'⁴⁹) suggests he also travelled to La Martella. Venturi was certainly aware of the social and architectural problems at both La Martella and Tiburtino, which lay at the centre of the *neorealismo* ideology: the relocation of rural populations into modern settlements, and the accompanying mediation of popular taste within high architectural culture.⁵⁰ This reconciliation of high and low cultures later became a chief focus of Venturi's architectural thinking, most famously presented in the *Learning from Las Vegas* study he conducted with Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour and a group of architectural students from Yale University in 1968. Here, in the commercial

vernacular of the strip, the authors proposed a reference point for a contemporary 'pop' architecture that could mediate between popular and high-taste cultures. In a similar vein, the Venturi team introduced more traditional and regional forms of architecture into their designs, as evidenced in the Trubek and Wislocki houses (1970) on Nantucket Island, which explicitly refer to the vernacular wooden architecture of the region. Italian neo-realists employed similar strategies in accommodating low-cultural imagery within a setting of high-cultural modern architecture: in Tiburtino, for example, architect Mario Ridolfi found inspiration in central Italian rural architecture which he referenced in his buildings. Italian *neorealismo* and Venturi's own architecture therefore share a basic philosophy toward the existing environment, in that both accept a vernacular tradition as a visual source for architectural production. In the case of *neorealismo*, rural building techniques and details are appropriated for contemporary practice; in Venturi's case, it is an American vernacular, be it regional or, as in *Learning from Las Vegas*, commercial. However, while *neorealismo*'s uncritical embrace of rural nostalgia amounted to a kind of regressive utopia, Venturi refrained from any such traditionalism, consistently resisting an explicitly conservative backlash against modernism in favour of its re-reading.⁵¹

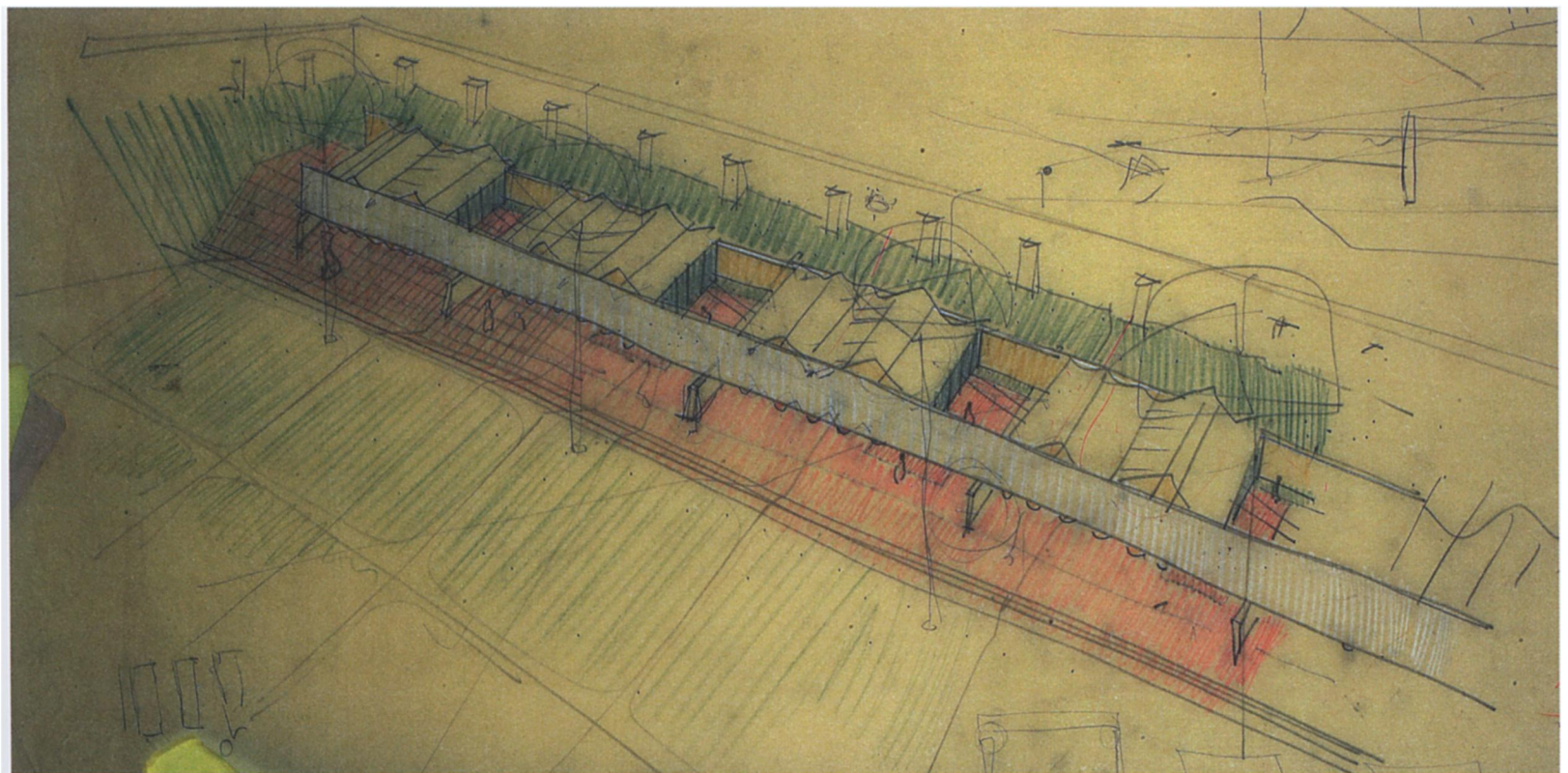
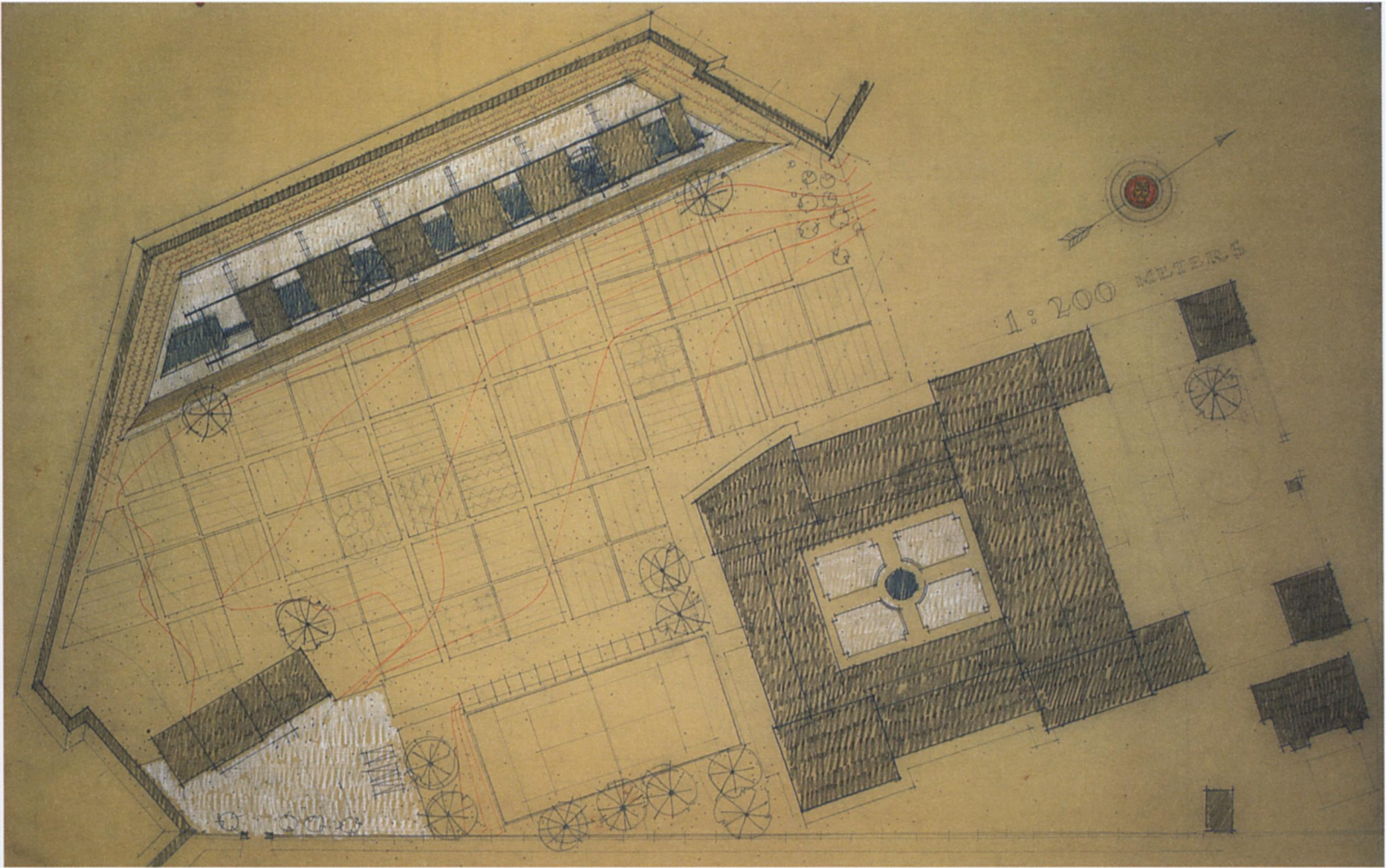
While Venturi's experiences at the American Academy in Rome were primarily dedicated to touring, reading and studying architecture, there was also the opportunity to carry out a design proposal. In the spring of 1955, under the supervision of Ernesto Rogers, the Academy's fine art and architecture fellows worked on design projects for additional studios in the grounds of the Academy's garden. Although none were ever realised, Venturi's proposal aroused the curiosity of the Academy's directors. In May 1958, he was asked to present his plans to the president of the Academy,⁵² but the project was later abandoned. The unexecuted design offered a quintessential digest of many of the themes prevalent during his stay at the Academy.

Venturi situated his proposed studio in the garden behind the Academy's main building. He intended to leave the existing garden as an intact open space in deliberate contrast to the surrounding urban fabric, as he stated in his project description: 'In the semi-suburban neighbourhood every other building is placed in the middle of its lot, leaving merely fragmentary spaces surrounding'.⁵³ To achieve this, he opted for a linear arrangement positioned on an artificially lowered level accessed by an external flight of steps. Due to this 'anti-pedestal', the full height of the projected studios could not be made out from the perspective of the main building. The objective was to let the building blend into its context. This, however, was achieved not by adapting the design to the vocabulary of McKim, Mead and White's neo-classicism, but through a close reading of the site and an interpretation of its specific quality as open space, analysing this physical context not in formal terms but only on an abstract and structural level.

In terms of the proposed pavilion spaces, the differentiation between two functionally distinct levels was central to the design, with the ground floor forming a terrace subdivided by a series of water pools. These were seen to encourage communication between the artists/inhabitants while at the same time serving as an open-air

exhibition space entirely accessible to the public and unified by the individual studio and living quarters above. These units were separated from each other by small courtyards and were accessed through individual spiral staircases. In an allusion to Le Corbusier and his ascetic paradigm of the monastery, Venturi wrote that '[t]he interior is determined . . . by the idea of work space enclosed for concentration, in contrast to the existing Academy studios with their expansive views, and in sympathy with the tradition of the monk's cell'.⁵⁴ As much as to the monastic model, Venturi related this idea of enclosed urban space to the neighbouring Trastevere quarter of Rome, but again the reference remained on an abstract and structural level, with no direct formal allusion being made to the built city.

The design, in this sense, was clearly informed by a modernist idiom, an allegiance literally made concrete with its *béton brut* walls. The slender pillars, in combination with the open-air ground floor, are reminiscent of Le Corbusier's *pilotis*; likewise the notion of treetops breaking through large circular holes in the roof surface is an obvious tribute to the 1922 Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau. However, unlike Le Corbusier's pavilion and later villas (at Garches, for example, in its confident disinterest in the surrounding vernacular), Venturi's project was not designed as a radical break with the existing ensemble. Apart from its blending into the site, other elements underline the architect's contextualist approach: the public ground-floor terrace relates to both a physical and cultural context by taking up the idea of the central courtyard from the main Academy building as well as by referencing the local tradition of the public piazza – an allusion that was further emphasised by the fountains and pools. On the south facade, Venturi continued to pay explicit tribute to the cultural context by applying a series of concrete casts of Roman reliefs in the style of direct citation. While the reference in this case was historical and remained in a strictly high-cultural context, the design also reflected the Italian everyday by playfully featuring clotheslines between the individual artists' quarters. Furthermore, the pavilion also absorbed a number of ideas prevalent in Italian architectural thinking at the time. Both Venturi's design strategies for the Academy project and those employed by BPR for the Torre Velasca or by Ignazio Gardella for the Casa alle Zattere were based on structural abstractions of historical elements; furthermore, both marked their distance to history by using concrete as a material metaphor for modernity. However, while Venturi's formal repertoire remained modernist, BPR and Gardella advanced one step further in their exploration of the historical: both the Torre Velasca and the Casa alle Zattere reflected their contexts through analogy on formal grounds. While the structural expressionism of the Torre Velasca took up a dialogue with Milan's nearby Gothic cathedral, the Casa alle Zattere blended into its surroundings by adapting the model of the neighbouring *palazzi* on a typological and formal level. This strategy of direct formal reference to the physical urban context became a device that Venturi only really employed later in his career, most notably in his design for the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London. With its borrowings from both history and modernism, as well as its contextualist approach on both a physical and cultural level, Venturi's pavilion project therefore assumes the status of an architectural allegory for his 'learning from Rome'. The design not only visually summarises some of the



Plan and perspective view of Robert Venturi's unrealised 1955 proposal for a series of studio spaces located in the rear garden of the American Academy in Rome.

architectural insights gained during his explorations around the city, but also reflects a number of theoretical positions in contemporary Italian debate. As such, it points the way to Venturi's future architectural and theoretical output, which itself closely mirrors his earlier experiences in Rome.

Venturi's two-year tenure at the American Academy in the mid-1950s can in this way be shown to occupy the central episode in his intellectual biography. His revisiting of the canon of European architectural history was a resumption of the classic tradition of the grand tour within the guise of a modern architectural education. Architects of the avant-garde in the first half of the twentieth century carried out their own architectural tours, but they did not recycle history into the contemporary discourse as Venturi did in *Complexity and Contradiction*. However, by frequently referring to the *oeuvre* of such architects as Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto, Venturi underlined his continuing allegiance to the modernist project. This he also made clear by formally resorting to the genre of the manifesto at a time when the era of the *grands récits* or master narratives of history was coming to a close, as Jean-François Lyotard diagnosed in 1979.⁵⁵ As a manifesto, *Complexity and Contradiction* once again tried to establish an overriding narrative, but its grandeur was deliberately and paradoxically infused with an argument for contradiction. Venturi's stance toward the modernist project was simultaneously one of reference and of alienation. By trying to keep the modernist project alive while at the same time attempting to overcome it, his position marked both the beginning and end of an era. With *Complexity and Contradiction*, therefore, Venturi changed the idea of the image of the architect and the concept of architectural learning. Before him, the architect was accountable primarily to his artistic imagination; after him, he became an interpreter and form-giver of a pre-existent cultural situation. This change of meaning had already been triggered by the Italian research of the 1950s, but it was Venturi who fully and ironically implemented it by reaffirming the cultural role of the architect and at the same time fundamentally questioning his own self-conception.

- 1 Mannerism was, at least explicitly, only marginally present in *Complexity and Contradiction*. However, understood more literally as 'breaking the rules', it was to develop into a key idea of Venturi's architectural thinking. According to him, he realised the validity of the concept for himself in his studio at the American Academy, shortly before leaving Rome in the summer of 1956 (personal communication to author, Philadelphia, 3 January 2002). On Venturi's (and Scott Brown's) understanding of mannerism, see Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *Architecture as Signs and Systems: For a Mannerist Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 73–101 and 212–217. Venturi here differentiates an 'explicit mannerism' referring to a particular historical period in the sixteenth century, from an 'implicit mannerism', which denotes a more general principle that can occur in any era or place.
- 2 On the history of the grand tour, see John Reeve, 'Grand Tour', in Jane Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 13 (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 297–306; Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour* (London: Thames Methuen, 1987); Tracey Jean Boisseau, 'Grand Tour', in Paul Finkelman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the United States in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), pp. 1–2; William W Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 3 On the history of the American Academy in Rome, see Lucia Valentine and Alan Valentine, *The American Academy in Rome 1894–1969* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973).
- 4 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), p. 173.
- 5 Personal communication to author, Philadelphia, 3 January 2002.
- 6 This experience is generally considered to be influential largely on Kahn's later work. See Eugene Johnson and Michael J Lewis, *Drawn from the Source: The Travel Sketches of Louis I Kahn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996). The American

- Academy in Rome remains in high esteem in American architectural academia, with the most promising students still expected to apply for the Rome prize.
- 7 In his applications Venturi did not lack the support of influential tutors and employers. In January 1952 his then boss Eero Saarinen wrote to the American Academy on his behalf calling him 'unique material for that scholarship' (Eero Saarinen to Laurance Roberts, 2 January 1952, American Academy in Rome Archives, New York). Other references came from Sherly W Morgan, the director of the Princeton School of Architecture, and from Louis Kahn. The following year, a letter by Donald Drew Egbert, his former Princeton teacher, called Venturi 'one of the three or four most promising graduates of our School of Architecture in the past twenty years', even though he considered Venturi's professional attitude at times 'a bit overintense' (Donald Drew Egbert to Mary T Williams, 27 January 1953, American Academy in Rome Archives, New York). In his third and successful application, Venturi's then friend and supporter Louis Kahn played a very important role. In a letter to his lover Anne Tyng of 8 January 1954 he mentioned having been asked by Venturi to write a letter of recommendation on his behalf, whereas in a subsequent letter of 30 January 1954 he alluded to a conversation with the secretary of the American Academy and with Eero Saarinen with the aim of urging him to support Venturi. See Anne Griswold Tyng (ed.), *Louis Kahn to Anne Tyng: The Rome Letters 1953–1954* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), pp. 89 and 95. A decisive moment in Venturi's application was probably the fact that in 1954 Kahn served as member of the jury of the American Academy in Rome granting the scholarships. Venturi at that time was Kahn's assistant at the University of Pennsylvania and occasionally worked in his office as an architect.
- 8 From the university catalogue of 1920–21, quoted in David Van Zanten, 'The "Princeton System" and the Founding of the School of Architecture, 1915–20', in Christopher Mead (ed.), *The Architecture of Robert Venturi* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), pp. 34–44. See also Stanislaus von Moos, *Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates: Buildings and Projects 1986–1998* (New York: Monacelli, 1999), pp. 28–29.
- 9 See Robert Venturi, 'Donald Drew Egbert – A Tribute' (1980), in *Iconography and Electronics Upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 43–45.
- 10 Robert Venturi, 'Summer Activities: Report and Some Impressions', unpublished typescript, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Archives, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (= VSBA Archives).
- 11 Personal communication to the author, Philadelphia, 3 January 2002. In a letter to his parents written on the day of his arrival in Rome, Venturi wrote: 'My first impression is favorable, I love it. It is really very different from what I expected – there is so much colour in the buildings against a deep blue sky + deep green foliage – something which we who have lived in America cannot imagi[n]g[,] many of the buildings are deep rouge – a beautiful combination of rose and yellow.' Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 8 August 1948, VSBA Archives.
- 12 Robert Venturi, 'Adorable Discoveries When I Was a Semi-Naive Fellow at the American Academy in Rome That I Never Forget' (1994), *Iconography and Electronics*, p. 57. On the influence of Henry James on mass tourism see Stowe, *Going Abroad*, pp. 161–194.
- 13 Due to this rather late arrival, Venturi missed a trip to the Venice Biennale exhibition and to other Italian cities organised by the Academy for the new fellows. See American Academy in Rome, Report 1951–1955 (New York and Rome, 1955). Besides Venturi the architecture fellows at the Academy at the time were: James A Gresham and Warren A Peterson for 1954–1955 and Charles G Brickbauer, James A Gresham, Warren A Peterson, and Dan R Stewart for 1955–1956. See *American Academy in Rome, Report 1951–1955*, p. 26; *American Academy in Rome, Report 1955–1959* (New York and Rome, American Academy in Rome, 1959), p. 13.
- 14 'He [Gaudi] is curious all right – but he is very strong + very great (sometimes he is like our Phila. Furness – but stronger + more fantastic).' Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 12 February 1956, VSBA Archives. The comparison of the Catalan with Frank Furness was a sign of high appreciation as Venturi on other occasions expressed his great respect for Philadelphia's leading Victorian architect. See Robert Venturi, 'Furness and Taste', *Iconography and Electronics*, pp. 63–65.
- 15 The writing process of *Complexity and Contradiction* was rather complex. Most of the book had already been written in the framework of a research grant from the Graham Foundation by 1962, to whose director Venturi sent a letter pleading for financial support in February of that year (Robert Venturi to John D Entenza, 15 February 1962, VSBA Archives). For details of the writing process see Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), p. 6. Even though the book was officially dated 1966 it was not available for distribution before March 1967; see Diane L Minnite, 'Chronology', in David B Brownlee, David G De Long and Kathryn B Hiesinger, *Out of the Ordinary. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates: Architecture, Urbanism, Design* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), p. 248.
- 16 Venturi, 'Summer Activities'.
- 17 *Ibid.*; Robert Venturi, personal communication to author, Philadelphia, 3 January 2002.
- 18 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 12 June 1955, VSBA Archives.
- 19 'At a certain point Krautheimer decided that we were ready for Late Baroque . . .

- He laid out an itinerary of South German churches and palaces in Bavaria and Franconia, and Bob, me and two other friends . . . made the pilgrimage.' Charles Brickbauer, personal communication to author, 22 November 2001.
- 20 'I want to express my gratitude to Richard Krautheimer, who shared his insights on Roman Baroque architecture with us Fellows at the American Academy in Rome'. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p. 14. Charles Brickbauer, another fellow at the Academy at the time, equally stressed Krautheimer's impact in this respect: 'Our luck was that Krautheimer was particularly disposed towards architects and loved walking the city and discussing whatever subject might be generated by a facade, a church, piazza or ruin. He was responsible for stimulating my interest in the baroque and I am sure he had the same influence on Bob.' Charles Brickbauer, personal communication to author, 22 November 2001.
- 21 Venturi had become interested in the issue of context earlier through gestalt psychology. His Princeton master's thesis of 1950 was dedicated to the question of how the (urban) context of a building affected its meaning. See Venturi, *Iconography and Electronics*, pp. 333–374.
- 22 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 23 March 1955, VSBA Archives.
- 23 Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 76.
- 24 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 2 May 1955, VSBA Archives.
- 25 Vincent Scully, 'Introduction', in Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 12.
- 26 *Neorealismo* did not originate with architecture. Rather, the term was coined for Italian cinema of the late 1940s, including films like *Vittorio De Sica's Sciuscià* (1946) or *Ladri di biciclette* (1949), which referred to a 'vernacular' language in a way comparable to architecture. Nor was *neorealismo* a genuinely Italian development. Rather, it must be considered a variety of realism, one of the main movements in European architecture at that time. Generally, two types of realism can be distinguished: on the one hand the social democratic realism in the Scandinavian countries, which is indebted to the modernist tradition, and on the other, the socialist realism of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. While the Scandinavian example was absorbed across Europe and Britain, where it found supporters particularly around *The Architectural Review*, it was also generally known in Italy. However, it has been argued that *neorealismo* was closer to the ideological impact of Soviet socialist realism than to Scandinavian new empiricism (as it was called by *The Architectural Review*). See Giovanna Massobrio and Paolo Portoghesi, *Album degli anni Cinquanta* (Roma: Laterza, 1977). On *neorealismo* in Italian architecture, see Bruno Reichlin, 'Figures de néoréalisme dans l'architecture italienne', in *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no. 69 (1999), pp. 76–113; Maristella Casciato, 'Neorealism in Italian Architecture', in Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (eds.), *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentations in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 25–53. For an early critical assessment of the movement by one of its propagators, see Ludovico Quaroni, 'Il paese dei barocchi', *Casabella continuità*, no. 215 (1957), pp. 24–25.
- 27 On neo-liberty and the discussions evolving around it see 'Neo-liberty: The Debate', in *The Architectural Review*, no. 754 (1959), pp. 341–344; Claudio D'Amato, 'La "ritirata" italiana del Movimento Moderno: memoria, sotira e questioni di stile nell'esperienza del neoliberty', in *Controspazio* 9, no. 4/5 (October–November 1977), pp. 50–51; Francesco Cellini, 'La polemica su neoliberty', *Controspazio* 9, no. 4/5 (October–November 1977), pp. 52–53; Roberto Gabetti, Aimaro Isola, Vittorio Gregotti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, 'Attualità di una polemica: antologia di testi sul neoliberty', *Controspazio* 9, no. 4/5 (October–November 1977), pp. 84–89.
- 28 See Ernesto Nathan Rogers, 'Continuità o crisi?', in *Casabella continuità*, 215 (1957), p. 4.
- 29 Reyner Banham, 'Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture', in *The Architectural Review*, no. 747 (1959), pp. 231–235. In this article Banham explicitly criticises Gae Aulenti, Vittorio Gregotti, Ludovico Meneghetti, Giotto Stoppino, Roberto Gabetti and their most outspoken defender, Aldo Rossi. Rogers, at first critical of the work of some of the younger generation himself, was not to put up with the Englishman's denigrations and fought back outspokenly, calling Banham a 'caretaker of the frigidaire'. See Ernesto N Rogers, 'L'evoluzione dell'architettura: Risposta al custode dei frigidaire', *Casabella continuità*, no. 228 (1959), pp. 2–4.
- 30 See Sara Protasoni, 'The Italian Group and the Modern Tradition', in *Rassegna* 14, no. 52 (1992), pp. 28–39.
- 31 Charles Jencks, 'Post-Modern History', in *Architectural Design* 48, no. 1 (1978), pp. 15–19.
- 32 *American Academy in Rome, Report 1951–1955*, pp. 27–28.
- 33 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 21 February 1955, VSBA Archives. The article mentioned was never published (its whereabouts are unknown). Venturi has later characterised its contents as 'speculating on the influence of Italian hilltowns on the design of Taliesin after Frank Lloyd Wright's Italian trip in 1910' (Robert Venturi, unpublished typescript, 15 January 1982, American Academy in Rome Archives, New York).
- 34 Robert Venturi to James Kellum Smith, 16 October 1956, VSBA Archives.
- 35 Ernesto N Rogers, 'La responsabilità verso la tradizione', *Casabella continuità*, no. 202, (1954), p. 2 (original English translation from the appendix of the magazine).
- 36 Ernesto N Rogers, 'La tradizione dell'architettura moderna italiana', *Casabella continuità*, no. 206, (1955), p. 4 (original English translation from the appendix of the magazine).
- 37 See Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, pp. 23–25 and 31.
- 38 Venturi saw functionalism essentially as a formalism of the industrial vernacular. See Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, 'Functionalism, Yes, But . . .', (1974), in *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953–1984* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 44.
- 39 See in this respect Moretti's articles in his journal *Spazio*. See also Federico Bucci and Marco Mulazzani, *Luigi Moretti: Works and Writings*, trans. Marina deConciliis (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).
- 40 See Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, pp. 29, 95. See in this respect also Moretti's Palazzina della cooperative Astrea in Rome, where the treatment of the facade as an element peeled off the building was introduced already in 1949. See Thomas Schumacher, 'Rome: Orphan of the Modern Movement or Cradle of Post-Modernism?', in Michael Graves (ed.), *Roma Interrotta, AD Profile* 20 (1979), p. 95.
- 41 Personal communication to author, Philadelphia, 3 January 2002.
- 42 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 8 February 1956, VSBA Archives.
- 43 An undated memo probably from the summer of 1955 lists the names of some contemporary Italian architects, among them Franco Albini. Under his heading, the list mentions 'Palazzo Bianco Genoa'. Robert Venturi, undated memo, VSBA Archives. Other important contributions to museum architecture by Albini in Genoa at that time are the restoration of the Palazzo Rosso (which, however, was not published until 1961) and the Museum of the Treasury of San Lorenzo (both 1952, with Franca Helg).
- 44 Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture 1944–1985* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 49.
- 45 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 9 May, VSBA Archives.
- 46 The list on modern Roman architecture includes, *inter alia*, houses by architect Pietro Aschieri from the late 1920s, several buildings in the Città universitaria, works by Mario Ridolfi, Luigi Piccinato, and Luigi Moretti (including the Casa del Girasole), and large suburban developments funded by the state-run INA-Casa housing programme, among them the quartiere Tiburtino or the high-rises at Via Etiopia by Ridolfi and Wolfgang Frankl. Venturi kept the lists in his papers; see VSBA Archives.
- 47 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 26 February 1955, VSBA Archives (De Carlo); 10 March 1955 (Morandi); 19 January 1956 (Chelazzi); 1 February 1956 (Piccinato); 14 March 1956 (Gandolfi). De Carlo presented his films on urbanism made for the 10th Milan Triennale of 1954 whereas Morandi discussed some bridge projects and industrial buildings; see *L'Architettura: Cronache e storia* 1, no. 1 (1955), p. 92. The invitations sent out to the participants of the seminars and kept in Venturi's papers give a further indication of who he had a chance to hear, although his frequent travels would have hindered him from attending regularly. According to these invitations, the following architects lectured at the INU seminars in 1954/55: Riccardo Gizdulich, Marcello d'Olivio, Giovanni Michelucci, Mario de'Luigi, Giancarlo De Carlo, Riccardo Morandi, Ugo Vallecchi, Mario Coppa, Giuseppe Vaccaro, Luigi Moretti, Emilio Pifferi, Adalberto Libera, Ludovico Quaroni, Nello Renacco, Ignazio Gardella and Cesare Brandi. For reasons unclear, this list does not correspond exactly to an article on these seminars published in *L'Architettura: Cronache e storia* 1, no. 1 (1955), p. 92. This article cites the following architects in addition to those already mentioned: Giovanni Astengo, Alberto Ressa, Mario Paniconi and Michele Valore. On the other hand, it makes no mention of the following: Giuseppe Vaccaro, Luigi Moretti, Emilio Pifferi, Ignazio Gardella and Cesare Brandi. For 1955/56, the schedule of the INU seminars remains unclear as no invitations have been archived for this period.
- 48 'Seminar of 17 April', unpublished typescript, VSBA Archives.
- 49 Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 23 April 1956, VSBA Archives.
- 50 This is suggested by series of prompts on an undated memo in the VSBA Archives with the title 'Moretti'.
- 51 On realism in Venturi's architecture, see Stanislaus von Moos, 'Zweierlei Realismus', in *Werk-Archithese* 64, no. 7/8 (1977), pp. 58–62; Dan Graham, 'Not Post-Modernism as Against Historicism, European Archetypal Vernacular in Relation to American Commercial Vernacular, and the City as Opposed to the Individual Building', *Artforum* 20, no. 4 (December 1981), pp. 50–58; von Moos, *Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown*, pp. 60–69.
- 52 Mary T Williams to Robert Venturi, 29 May 1958, Archives of the American Academy in Rome, New York.
- 53 Robert Venturi, 'Project: Additional Studios, American Academy in Rome', VSB 500, Project: Additional Studios, American Academy in Rome, VSBA Archives.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 24–36.

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