

The body and architecture in the drawings of Carlo Scarpa

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In contemporary architectural drawing, the presence of the human figure, to give scale, is absolutely indispensable. This has not always been the case. In older representations, the scale relation between drawing and building itself was mediated by a design method in which the human figure was incorporated into the elements of architecture by simile and metaphor, by an organic use of stone and rendering. The goal was the transubstantiation of architectural artifact into human presence, and vice versa; it was possible because technology was understood as a productive system that operated simultaneously on two levels, the rhetorical and the physical one (Frascari 1985: 4). The world constructed by this twofold process of view thus became experience translated into a visual and tactile manifestation of thinking.

The theoretical drawings developed by the Tuscan Renaissance architect Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1961) to illustrate his architectural treatises are ideal examples of such an interpretation of the world as a product of the twofold technology resulting from the projection of the human body. A building is as it is because it is both constructed by man and interpreted through the human form (fig. 1). The logic of the constructive technique is part of the technique of verbal logic, and vice versa. In this procedure the body is the most general and perfect means for arriving at a sizing of the reality of the architectural world. The body as reality becomes the unit of architectural production since it sets brick upon brick. It is also the formal basis for the configuration from the elements of construction to whole cities (figs. 2, 3).

Architectural anthropomorphism—the ascription of human characters and attributes to buildings and edifices—has a long tradition in architectural theory. Vitruvius, a rhapsodic architect from the first century B.C., describes the diverse forms it took in the Hellenistic-Roman tradition of his day. It was a practice suggested for the determination of both measure and proportion to stimulate the imagination of the designer and the builder. In our own time Leon Krier (1984), an aggressive postmodern architect from Luxemburg, returns to the metaphor and the anthropomorphic conception in his battle against the deleterious modernist city (fig. 4) and its poorly organized body,

patched up as it is by mechanistic and functionalistic prostheses and the transplant of organs to improper sites (fig. 5).

The abstracting of architectural representation in the modern movement is required by the alienation of human corporality from the business of building. Thus the elaborations of modern projects favor a Cartesian rationality; they produce mathematical constructions but lack human reality. If one compares drawings by Krier with those by Francesco di Giorgio, one can see how the decline in the anthropomorphic construct both has produced, and is produced by, a corresponding

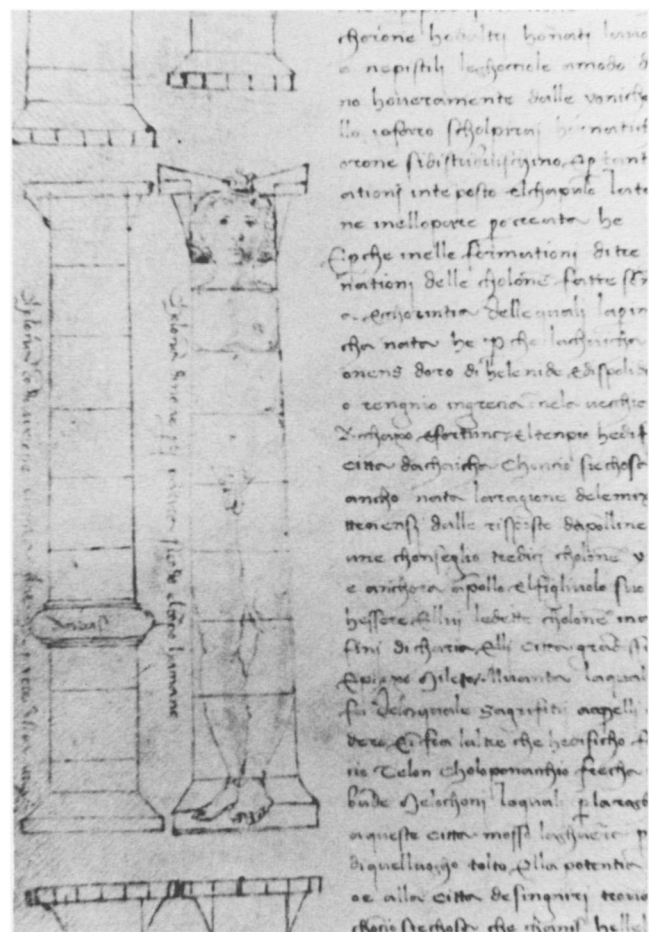


Figure 1. Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Proportion of columns, *Trattati*.

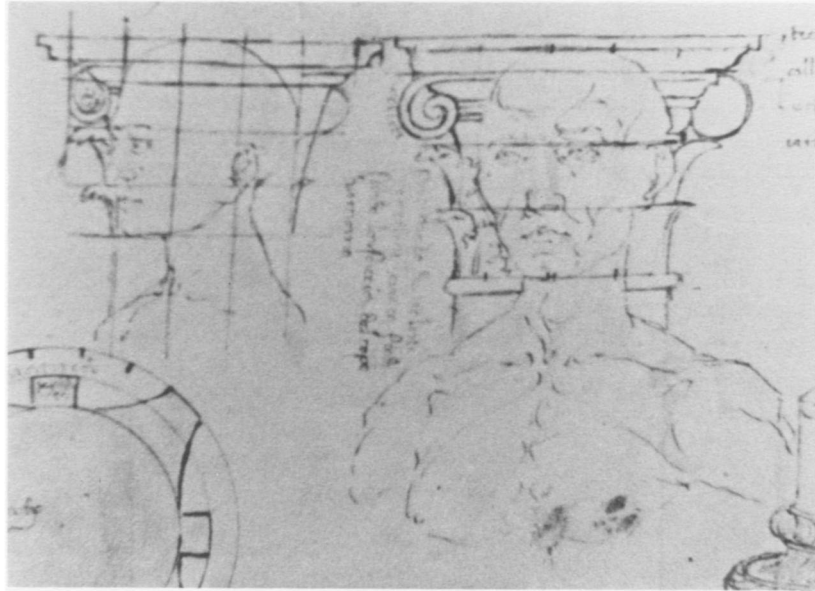


Figure 2. Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Proportion of capitals, *Trattati*.

change in human self-identification. In antiquity, man could represent his universe through topological projection of his own body, and understand his body in this projection. Contemporary architecture, however, is constructed according to the dictates of modern rationalism, and therefore no longer adheres to this topology. Figures and anthropometric sections used by architects in their drawings are the last—and least—of the approaches to the reintegration of human presence into the architectonic artifact.

The figures in the drawings of the modern architects can be grouped into three categories. The first includes all the possible naturalistic representations of the human figure and all artifacts that can help the nonarchitect imagine a three-dimensional future reality in a two-dimensional rendering—that is, to understand the project on paper, within the context of presentation drawings for clients. The second category includes all the abstract representations used to verify the anthropometry, a graphic process that eliminates errors of dimension during the project's formulation. The third category is a result of the interaction of the first two, with representations of the human figure based on pseudoformal abstractions generally favored by architecture students. Men, women, and children become biped balloons with pointed feet and floating heads, sometimes with a bow tie below the head of the largest figure to distinguish it as male (fig. 6). In any case, these three categories present only stereotypes

that have lost any ontological dimension; they are simply a form of communication oriented to the common man and to the technician, or a formal representation to other architects of the possible problems of scale and dimension.

Despite the present limitations of the role of the body in architectural drawing, I would like to suggest that architects cannot do without the anthropomorphic practice of identification of the human body and its elements in the architectural body. A new practice of body/building topology is now required—one that avoids the all too simple road of isomorphism, isotopy, and the metaphoric analogies of the architecture of the past, but will, instead, use the body as the element of reference for architectural metonymy.

In rhetorical usage, metonymy is a semantic shift based on a relationship of logical and material contiguity between literal and figurative terms. While in metaphor the relationship established is pragmatic and extrinsic (city = body, head = seat of government, stomach = market, church = heart, and so on), in the metonymy the relationship is syntagmatic and intrinsic: effects substitute for causes, materials for objects, the contained for the container, the abstract for the concrete, or vice versa. In architecture, vision is dominant; its morphological characteristics are perceived as nonvisual qualities that give privileged status to various forms of perception. A sound is grave or acute; a tactile sensation is soft or cold. The

metonymy works through the privileged status of perception, while the metaphor is based primarily on judgment, which depends on other forms of knowledge. In a metonymic procedure, the drawing of a handle results from a mold in the form of a hand that grasps, rather than from a formal representation of the hand itself. Another metonymy, primarily synecdoche, is exemplified by an illustration by Teofilo Gallacini for his treatise on fortifications. In his drawing of a rampart, the architectural form is anthropomorphized into a head, based on the metonymy for look-out, rather than on the metaphoric isotopy of “headship” in a bastion (fig. 7).

The drawings and architectural production of Carlo Scarpa (1906–1978) are an ideal source for characterizing the method, processes, and elements of this practice of architectural metonymy. Scarpa, a great *Dilettante Veneto*, was one of the few original masters of Italian contemporary architecture, cultivating in almost complete isolation, in the calm and potent Venetian mixture of *otium* and *negotium*, his extraordinary vocation. The anthropomorphism in Scarpa’s architectural procedures is neither the cosmological isomorphism of Francesco di Giorgio nor the metaphoric imagery of Krier, but is based on an understanding of the human being as *homo viator*. In Scarpa’s architecture, the human figure is both the subject that produces the buildings *sub specie corporis*, and the object starting from which the building is made. As Hubert Damish has pointed out (Dal Co 1984: 210), Scarpa’s drawings are not static images; they are dynamic demonstrations of an act of projection that has the world-construct for its final goal. In his design development drawings, Scarpa uses representations of human figures and their parts to recount the story of the vicissitudes and accidents of the project. The images of human bodies in these drawings are at once abstract and concrete, generalized and specific. They act within the representation, mediating the semantic transfer through a logical and material connection between human behavior and the specifications required by the work, the terms of the work as transferred in the architectural workings.

One of Scarpa’s favorite sayings was a Latin tag: *nullo dies sine linea*. Originally, this motto of Plautus’s was an invitation to the everyday literary practice. In his appropriation of the phrase, Scarpa, like others before him (e.g., Viollet-le-Duc in *Histoire d’un Dessinateur*, Paris, 1879), modified the meaning of “line,” extending the sense of the motto to the

everyday practice of drawing, which he saw as the basic instrument of theoretical and practical architectural activity.

Among the various ways of analyzing an architect’s work, the study of drawings, by itself, usually results in an incomplete assessment—the final construct, as an artifact, must always be implicit. Real architectural drawings are not limited to simple presentations of a future construction, but are privileged representations of a conceptual elaboration of architecture. Even so, since the final aim is the construction of the building, these representations are limited. Consequently, while analysis of the traditional detailed project drawings can permit the characterization of a theory, they do not ordinarily permit its verification *in corpore vili*, that is, in the construction. Scarpa’s drawings, however, do not generate such ambiguity. The heavy wing card, light

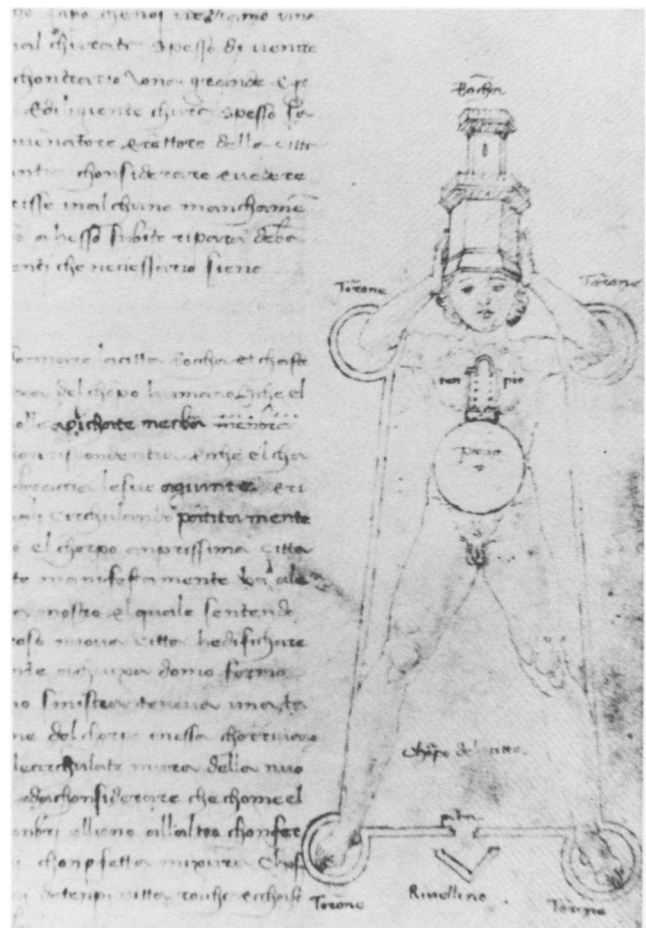


Figure 3. Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Design of a city, *Trattati*.

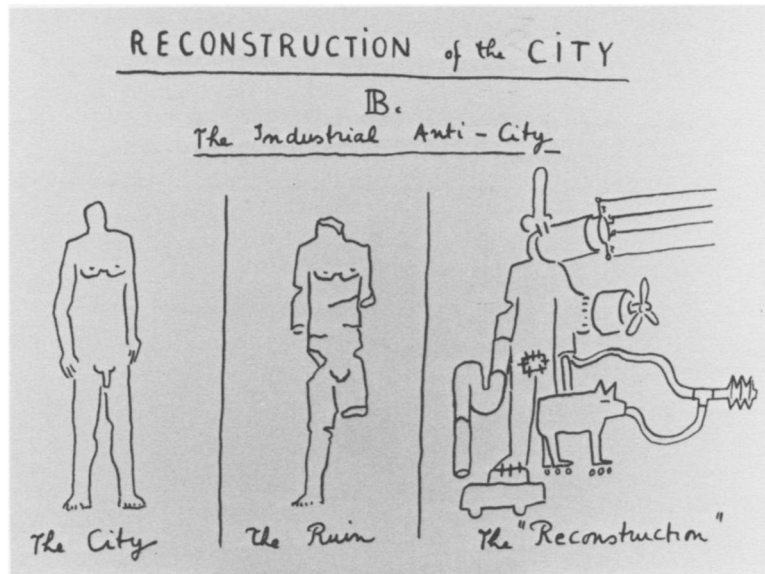


Figure 4. Leon Krier. The Reconstruction of the City.

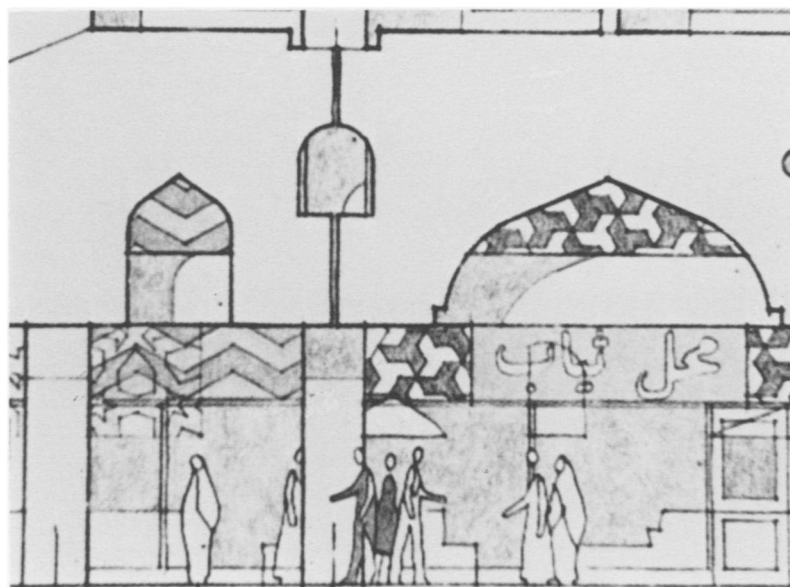


Figure 5. Robert Venturi. Scale Figures.

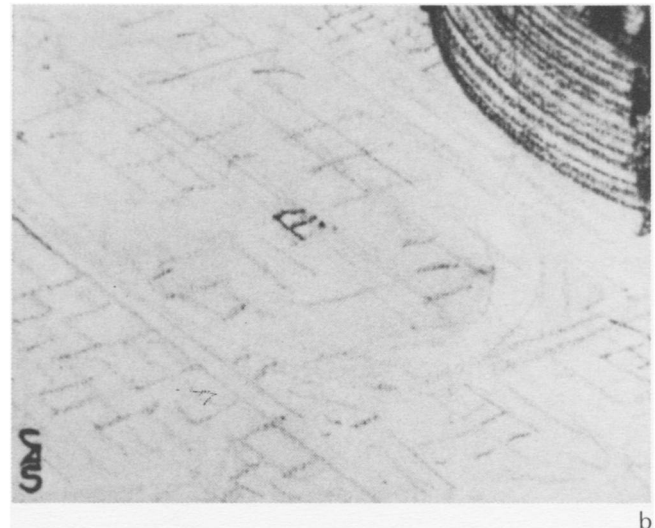
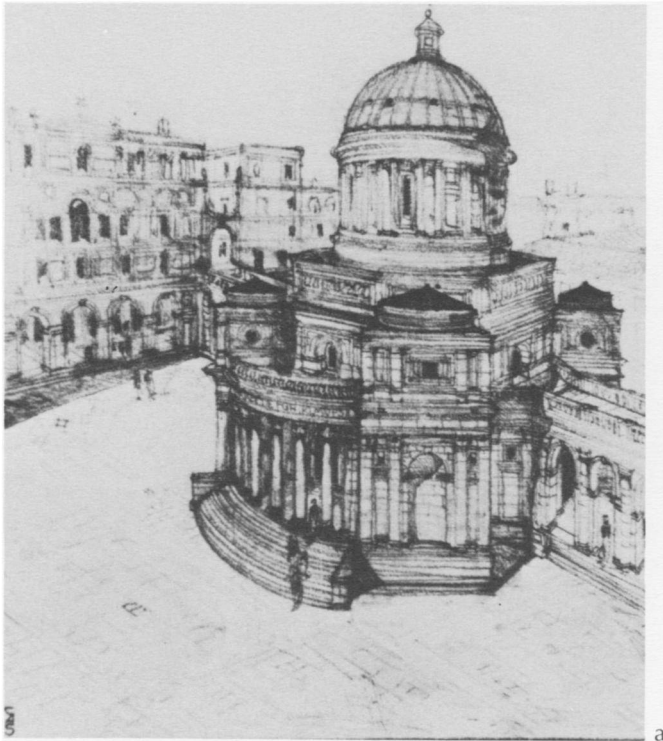


Figure 6. a. Carlo Scarpa, perspective drawn for a school exercise. b. Detail.

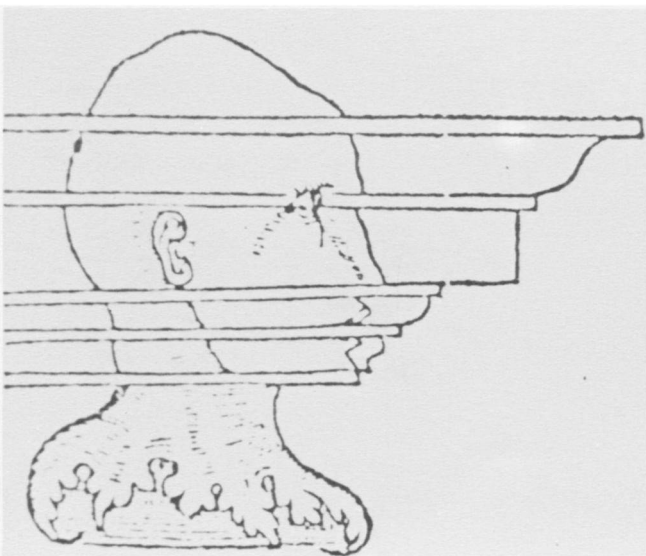


Figure 7. Diedo da Sagredo. Anthropometric proportion of a cornice, *Epitome*.

tracing paper, backs of cigarette boxes used as support and vehicle for his architectural ideas, are transformed into representations of a continuous meditation on the union of a theory with a practice. It is a theory that cannot be verbalized, but that communicates by means of the dialogue between the drawn line and the surface that is its vehicle, an entire process of construction. Each of Scarpa's drawings is proof of the Vitruvian motto *ex fabrica ratiocinatione*. The signs traced on the paper coalesce and crystallize in continuous theoretical explorations of architecture, in representations that are proposed as possible architectural realities. The drawings are themselves an architecture. These sketches omit tones and conventional efforts to communicate, assuming the significance of an iconic message reserved for the construct. We might say, figuratively, that these sketches are the result of eliminating the gulf between the "saying" of theory and the "doing" of construction. They are instruments whose function resembles that of the supervisors, craftsmen, bricklayers, carpenters, and stonecutters who transform the construction drawings into physical objects. In Scarpa's particular case, the lines (like words) turn to stones, or better still, become the account of the process of putting the stones on each other. This kind of writing weaves a multitude of more or less subtle relationships between architectural details, bringing the mind to see and feel the links that unite ways of being with ways of building. In these drawings marks and lines stand for the pegs and lines of a site layout; on them walls are built, demolished, and restored. Destruction is accomplished by rapid erasures,

and the reconstruction sometimes follows the incised marks left by lines drawn in hard pencil and then erased. On these wonderful surfaces, the process by which the Basilica of Vicenza or the Ducal Palace in Venice were created, is condensed into a few brief movements. The making and unmaking of history is re-created with pencils, colors, and erasers.

Scarpa's designs are drawn on heavy drawing card stretched on a board—his favorite support for the formulation of his architectural thought, where architecture is the result of successive "strata" of meditation. On the precious surface of a heavy card are set and superimposed the nervous marks of charcoal and pastel, the deeply incised marks of the hard pencil—memories that remain, despite erasures. Finally, there are the definitive signs of the India ink, diluted so as not to be antagonistic to the pencil. Next to heavy paper is white or yellow tracing paper, the translucent support of a quick dialogue, for superimposing onto ideas already recorded on the opaque card. Beyond these desk drawings are pen sketches traced with the quick, masterly gesture on the backs of boxes of cigarette boxes of his favorite Oriental tobacco. These drawings record a constant architectural thought, and became his lifeline. Scarpa produced thousands of drawings for each of his projects; in them, human figures emerge as a continuous presence and as favorite images. An analysis of these figures in their various roles can demonstrate what might be a valuable modern usage of anthropomorphic practice. As Scarpa stated in the course of a lecture in Madrid:

I want to make a confession: I would very much like some critic to discover certain intentions in my work that I have always had. That is to say, a powerful desire to work within tradition, but without making capitals and columns, because these can no longer be made.

Dal Co 1984: 287

The first indication of Scarpa's use of the human body as fundamental for his understanding of architectural creation was a scholastic exercise at the Accademia in Venice—a detailed view drawn for a course taught by Professor Guido Cirilli (fig. 7). The drawing presents a pen drawing of a central-plan building of Late Venetian Renaissance flavor with geometric nuances that recall Longhen. The view is framed by a line marked in pencil. Scarpa uses the space outside of the frame for notes on ideas, checks, and analytical studies of details of the building presented in the view. Near the lower left corner of the

frame, embedded in the sketches, is the clue we seek: a human profile opposite that of a molding. The inane face of this architectural personage recalls, in its expression, the astonished face superimposed on a composite molding designed by Diego de Sagredo (1564: 14) to indicate anthropomorphic proportions (fig. 8). This superimposing of a human profile over a composite molding profile as a constant in judging the value and character of architectural elements from a physiognomic point of view was again used, toward the end of the eighteenth century, by Jacques-François Blondel. In his treatise, Blondel criticizes a Tuscan cornice by Palladio, demonstrating that the combination of molding profiles produced by the great Vicentine architect displays a discordant physiognomy: "the nose of an infant of twelve years sustained by the chin of a venerable gentleman of twenty-four years and crowned by the forehead of a man of fifty years" (Blondel 1771: I, 261) (fig. 9). The inane face drawn by Scarpa shows how the role of the human body in relation to the construct developed in his drawings. It is not only isomorphic and metaphoric; in the undoubtedly intentional irony of the expression selected—the dull face for a dull scholastic architecture—there is the seed of the metonymic system of the use of bodies in his more mature works.

The transition in Scarpa's work from a classic anthropomorphism to a modern one undoubtedly

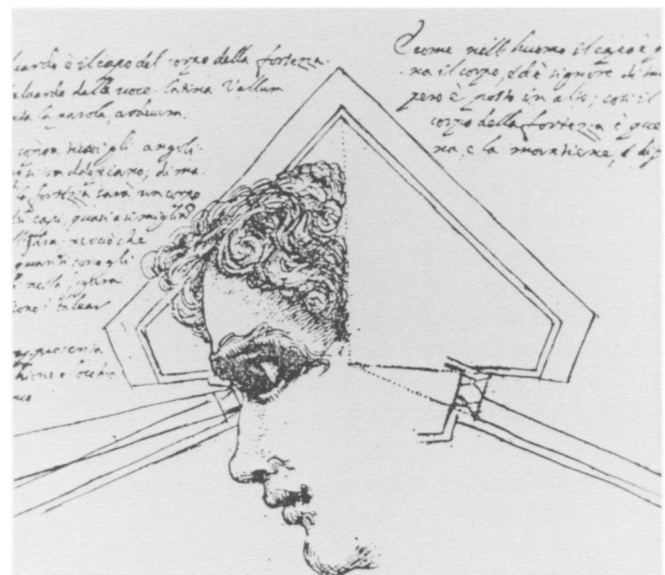


Figure 8. Teofilo Gallacini. Plan of a bastion, *L'idea della Fortificazione*.

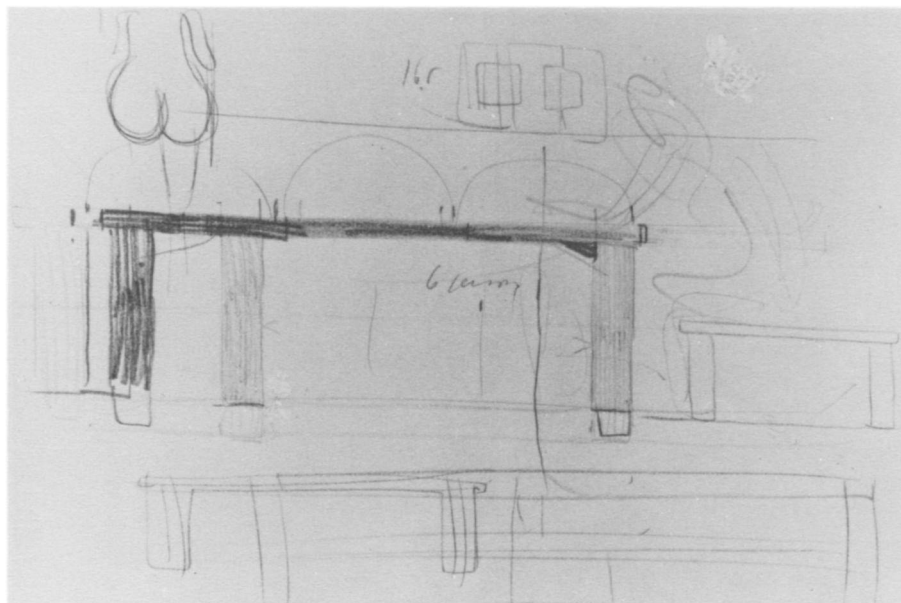


Figure 9. Carlo Scarpa. Table “millenovecentotrentaquattro” (1934), for six persons.

occurred during his preparatory retreat to the world of Venetian glass. Almost all of the critics of Scarpa’s architecture agree that between the period 1926 and the early 1940s was a time of meditation and productive silence: a pause in architectural production during which Scarpa

patiently contemplates human labour in the furnaces of the glazier: his silence that is understood and appreciated all the more as you consider the early works of some of our best-known architects in the official journals of the ‘Thirties.

Brusatin 1972: 5

In these drawings Scarpa transformed his approach to the role of the human body through a different material. In drawing figures prepared for incising on the glass wheel, Scarpa used both the dynamic dimensions of construction and a vision of the outlines of the glass to present the bodies and their members in a constant play with the materiality and reflections of the incised glass body. In a preparatory sketch for a series of vases dedicated to the four seasons, summer is represented by a woman seen from the back, who is undressing—a curly, callipygean motif reflecting the dominant form, which in turn determines the background beyond the figure. The drawing is for a double-jacketed vase of glass, curled and then unfolded. Beside the drawing there is a quick note: “You remember that verse by Valery, *‘un frisson entre deux chemises’*” (fig. 10).

Scarpa used the same callipygean motif in the drawing for a table designed in 1934 and produced by Cassina in 1976. The motif is rapidly sketched in the upper left of the drawing and floats freely over the table. The notation is not casual, but emphasizes being seated as the dominant theme of the order of the table—a theme repeated in the figure at the head of the table in the same drawing, a study of the dimensions of a table for six (fig. 11). In the study sketch of the same table for eight, the callipygean motif appears again, here assuming a dynamic presence rocking on the seat of an invisible chair (fig. 12).

Figures of women predominate in Scarpa’s drawings: stupendous nudes of contours and lines in constant dialogue with the architectural artifacts proposed in the drawings. For Scarpa, architecture is undoubtedly woman, but not prosaic and middle-aged with nude arms and iridescent dress, as in the Baroque iconological representation developed by Carlo Ripa (1675: 115). For Scarpa the image is poetic; his architecture, like his figures of women, is a continuous research into a tangible beauty, not a canonical and abstract one. This poetic relationship between the body of woman and architecture was expressed by Scarpa in a lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna: “We can say that the architecture that we would like to be poetry should be called harmonious, like the beautiful face of a woman” (quoted in Dal Co 1985: 283).

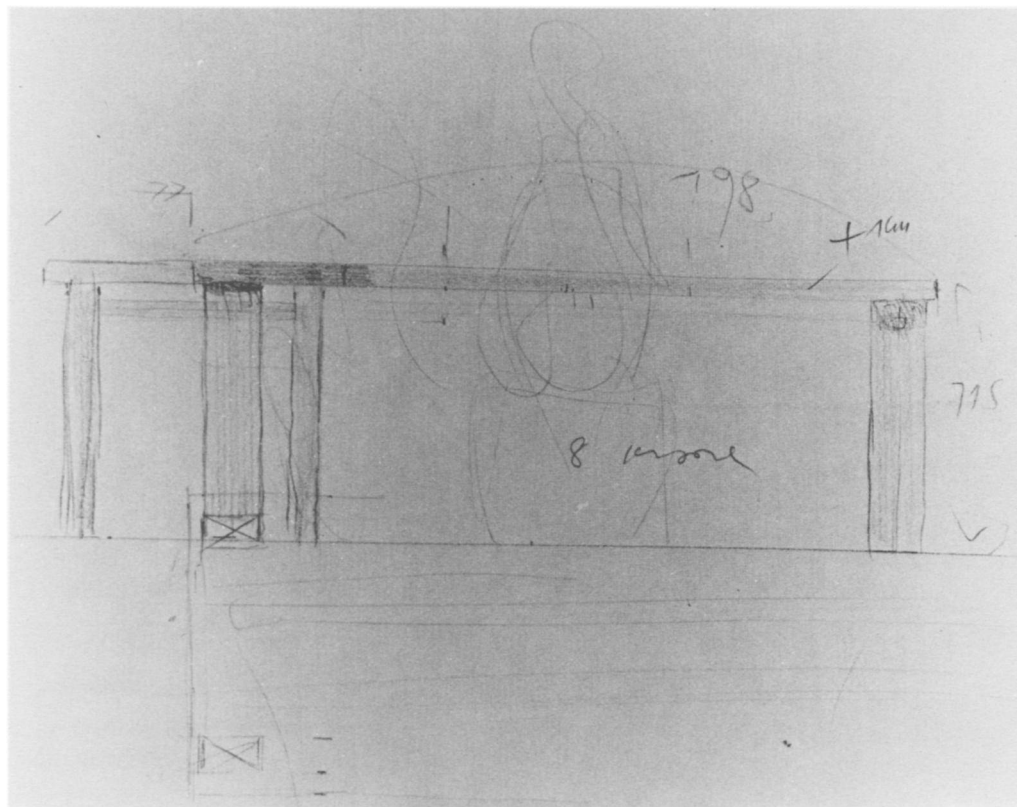


Figure 10. Carlo Scarpa. Table "millenovecentotrentaquattro" (1934), for eight persons.

In many of Scarpa's drawings, the figures of women are in groups of three, like the Graces or the Parcae. In a design Scarpa devised for an opening outlined by crossed circles in the wall facing the entrance to the Brion Tomb in the Cemetery of Altivole, three female figures, with the lineaments of thirties-style figurines, give a rhythm to the tripartite construction of this "impassable" window (fig. 13). The opening is generated by two intersecting metal-edged rings decorated with rose and blue mosaic mounted on either side of the window, within the channel of the metal profile. The geometry of the face of the central figure regulates the intersection of the circles. The geometry of this wonderful female face is the origin of the minimal system of the relationship between the two circles. The face, with its forehead set at the intersection of the two circles, determines the rule for the intersection by means of the position of the eyes, nose, and mouth. In these circles, the canonical relation of the diagonal of the square and the golden mean are disregarded. Instead, a two-faceted relationship is approached but not attained, just as a perfect symmetry in the

human face is never achieved. This drawing indicates, furthermore, Scarpa's great attention to microarchitectural conditions; a forehead set against the cool metal of the window frame is most probably at the beginning of the architectural reflection that produced the geometric thought of the intersection of the circles. This attention that avoids the macro in favor of the micro is at the base of this new embodiment of architecture. A "being" and a "making" that focuses, as Manlio Brusatin has indicated,

the minimal mechanisms of small systems that subtend—as in biological life—to the production of larger systems of artificial and artistic forms. A sensibility in designing that takes note of the union of all the small things which have great effects and the discontinuity of the great that finish in miniature (*minima crescunt maxime maxima descrecunt*).

Brusatin 1984: 24

The small things of the body and its habits constantly regulate Scarpa's planning.

In another drawing for the Brion Tomb entrance, a rapid note at the foot of the three entrance steps—"if

moved to the right everyone will go to the right” — again indicates the remarkable attention Scarpa pays to minimal but fundamental facts of humanity in the use of the constructed space (fig. 14a). Guido Pietropoli has analyzed the idea that generated the decision for this detail masterfully: The building at the entrance to the tomb is based on an axial directrix grafted orthogonally on a narrow passage that leads to the left, to a site of reverence, to the arch-volt which protects the sarcophagus of the Brion; and to the right, a site of meditation: a platform with a canopy placed in the center of a large water basin. The walls of the entrance

are of concrete, decorated with squares of plaster whitewashed with clear stucco. The base of the two crossed rings is on the axis. The note mentioned above refers to three small steps interposed in the larger steps that break up the entrance space. In the drawing of the long section, the three small steps are moved considerably to the left. The note is undoubtedly correct from the formal point of view of axial composition; the displacement to the left is inexplicable unless one reconsiders the body and its manner of communication, using its own nature as a matrix for all information. Scarpa's note indicates his reflection, but in the end he retains his first intuitive choice. The body,

without the schemes of the mind, knows how to see what it looks at and will understand that this stairway moved from the side of the heart suggests the imitation of a sorrowful ascent/descent to the city of the dead, turning to the left to encounter the affections most dear: father and mother.

Pietropoli 1983: 5

Many heads crowd Scarpa's drawings: heads of beautiful women, indeterminate adolescent faces, classic profiles, and sometimes caricatures, most often self-caricatures that are always (extremely) significant. The presence of Scarpa himself in a drawing is a sign that something special is reserved for that particular space. In the same drawing of the entrance to the Brion Tomb where he notes the movement of the steps, a head looking up floats bodiless in the air of the transverse section of the building. A visible line is drawn from the eye of this figure fragment (fig. 14b). This line delimits the outline of the internal part of the flower stand that spans the entrance threshold. The eye is indicated in the sketch of the head by a point in a small circle. The same notation, the small circle and the point, is repeated through all of the section, many times with quick diagonal lines radiating from them, determining the opening and outline of various moldings and steps that give rhythm to the space. The path that the visitor takes through this monument has been attentively studied by Scarpa; the way in which the architecturally inattentive visitor perceives them becomes the pretext for the relationship between space, light, and shadow that he generates. The small head, which he creates with a few quick strokes, is a self-caricature. The expression is cunning, as if to say, "I know something that you do not, but which in any case will captivate your eye through a reflection of shining brass or a shadow darker than the others, which I—

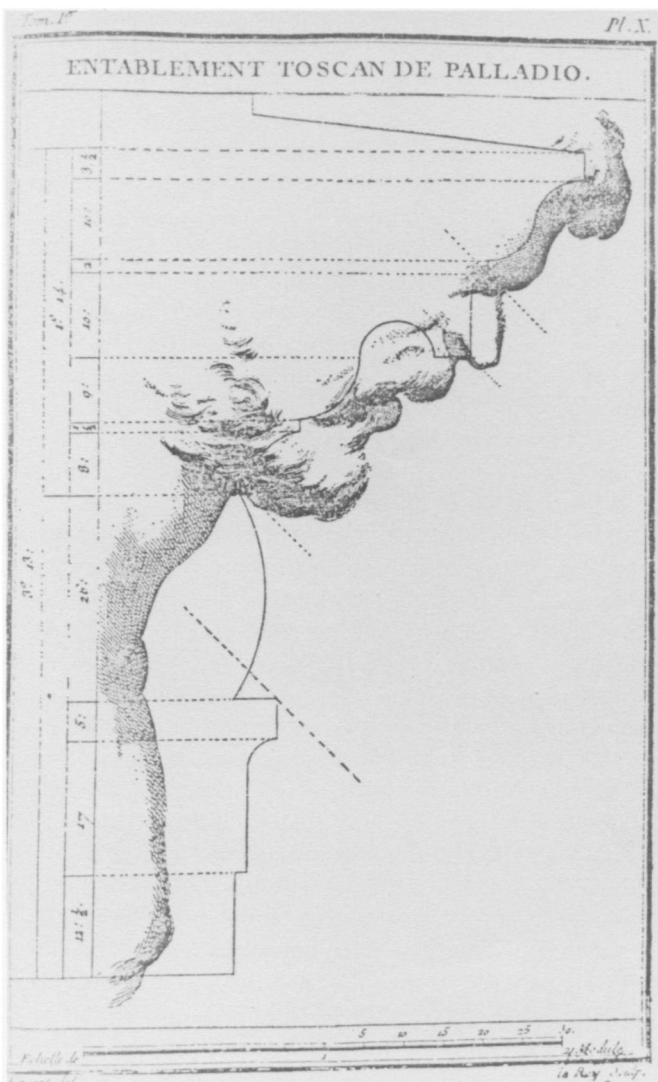


Figure 11. Jacques-François Blondel. Palladio's Tuscan Entablature, *Cours d'Architecture*.

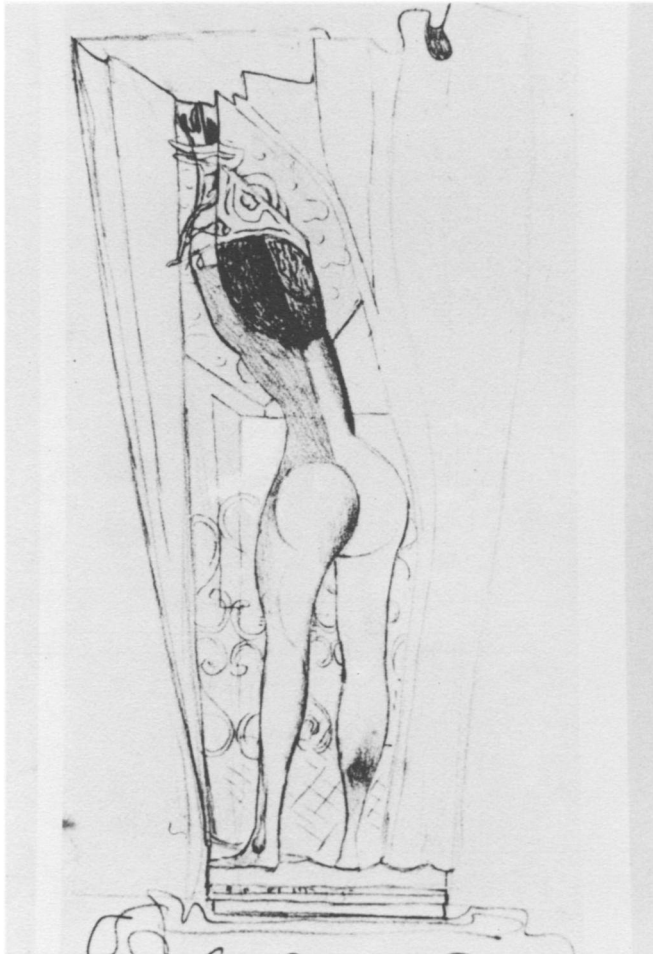


Figure 12. Carlo Scarpa. Sketch for a glass vase.

who have put myself into this drawing—have devised.”

In a sketch project for the large door inside the chapel in the garden of the Brion Tomb, two heads inserted into the composition demonstrate the internal rule of the artifact (fig. 15). The door is made up of a metal section over a square grid, asymmetrically pivoted. Each square is filled with white cement cast in glass shuttering (a technique that produces extremely smooth surfaces), then decorated with small Greek crosses in brass, produced by shuttering spacers cast into the panels. In the center of gravity of the door a smaller one of veneered wood opens and has a central vertical aperture of transparent glass. In the drawing, two heads are inserted in this small door. One face emerges, as though from behind misted glass, looking through the glazed aperture. This physiognomy is very

unlike the evanescent one behind the opaline glass. Instead, it has the slightly mocking expression of a youth who has gotten away with a playful prank. The other figure is a profile caricature of Scarpa himself, observing from above, not in the background where one might expect him to be. (This profile is not sketched in the background where one would expect it, considering the vision of the object and the space that encompasses it.) Scarpa's head is a part of the material of the object itself, the door and Scarpa unified in an ambiguous representation of architectural reality, an affirmation of the being in the reality that is architecture. The frustration of scenographic presentation, easing the fusion of reality with what is done on a perceptual act which is *donné*, is given as a first form of knowledge, a manifestation of being in building. The door in question is an *ianua*; the two heads represent the two-sided nature of Janus-Scarpa, the master and the playful pupil. In fact, the small door itself presents this two-sided nature of the building: on one side the veneered panel is placed on the bottom while on the other side it is placed in the upper part of the door. The presence of the smaller door in the larger one, furthermore, indicates the role played by the threshold of this opening to the chapel—the last stop on our earthly voyage—and our continuous need to remember this rite of passage.

Another example of Scarpa's use of the human figure in the traditional identification with interior furnishings is in his drawing of the fireplace projected for the Balboni House (fig. 16). In his detail drawing for the fireplace, Scarpa and the patroness are present next to the object. The best-defined parts of the two figures are the heads that, drawn with nervous sinuous lines, are sustained by giant wings. Traces of the real bodies are indicated by fine, vague lines. The two bodies as projections of giant wings are a part of the fireplace. A similar, perhaps more persuasive image of the process of identification of the body as norm and as indirect element of every space and object constructed is in the preparatory drawing for the arrangement of a wall in the gallery in the Accademia in Venice (fig. 17). In the elaboration of this project, two paintings—attentively delineated by Scarpa—have been mounted on fabric-covered panels. He uses the pyramidal composition of these pictorial images to generate the geometric construction of the panels. A series of intersecting squares is rotated forty-five degrees in respect of the perpendicular determining the dimensions, proportions, and the salient points of the project. While the use of

rotation of the diagonals can be seen clearly in the construction of the drawing, the geometric concept is indicated by the triangular joint, a square cut on the diagonal and rotated, which brackets the horizontal beam supporting the panels to the bearing wall. At the extreme right of the drawing a female figure seen from the back and characterized by the light pose of a classical dancer determines the hanging line of the paintings by the upper line of her coiffure. To the right of the drawing, beyond the representation of the vertical section of the panels, there is a pole that supports a mask of powerful outline with a shadow that suggests almost metallic reflections. The eye of this mask is in front of the dotted lines that indicate the niche where the paintings will be placed; the eye organizes the form of this mask/helmet in balance on a vertical support. The abstraction of this static personage, in contrast to the dancing figure's celebration of movement, both points to and guides the process of rarification of the space—from the two-

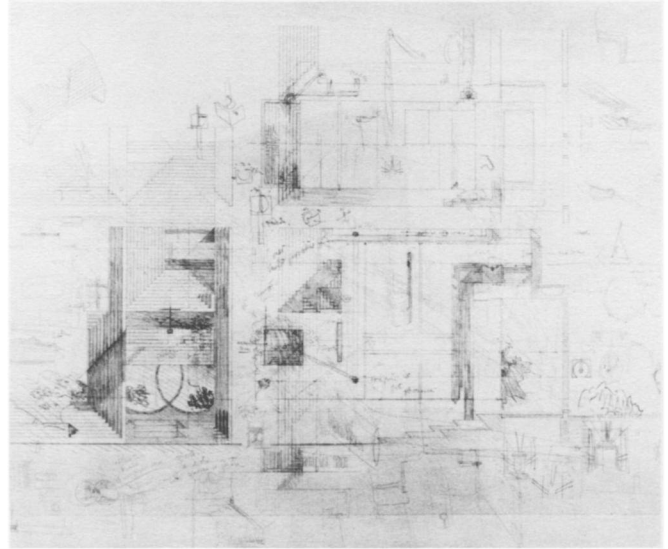


Figure 13. Carlo Scarpa. Entry, Brion Cemetery, Elevation and Section.

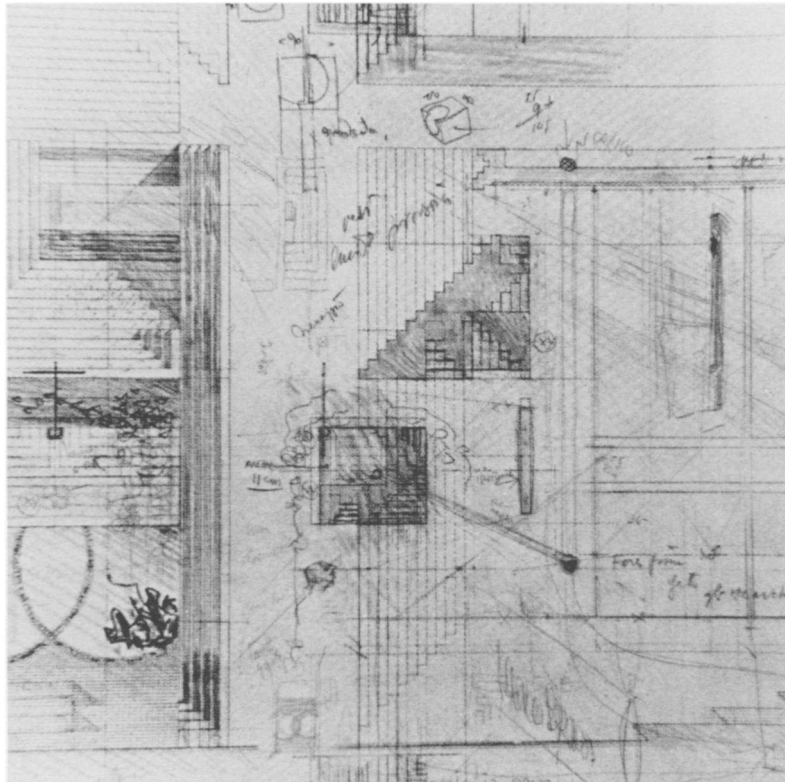


Figure 14. Carlo Scarpa. Entry, Brion Cemetery, detail of the Section.

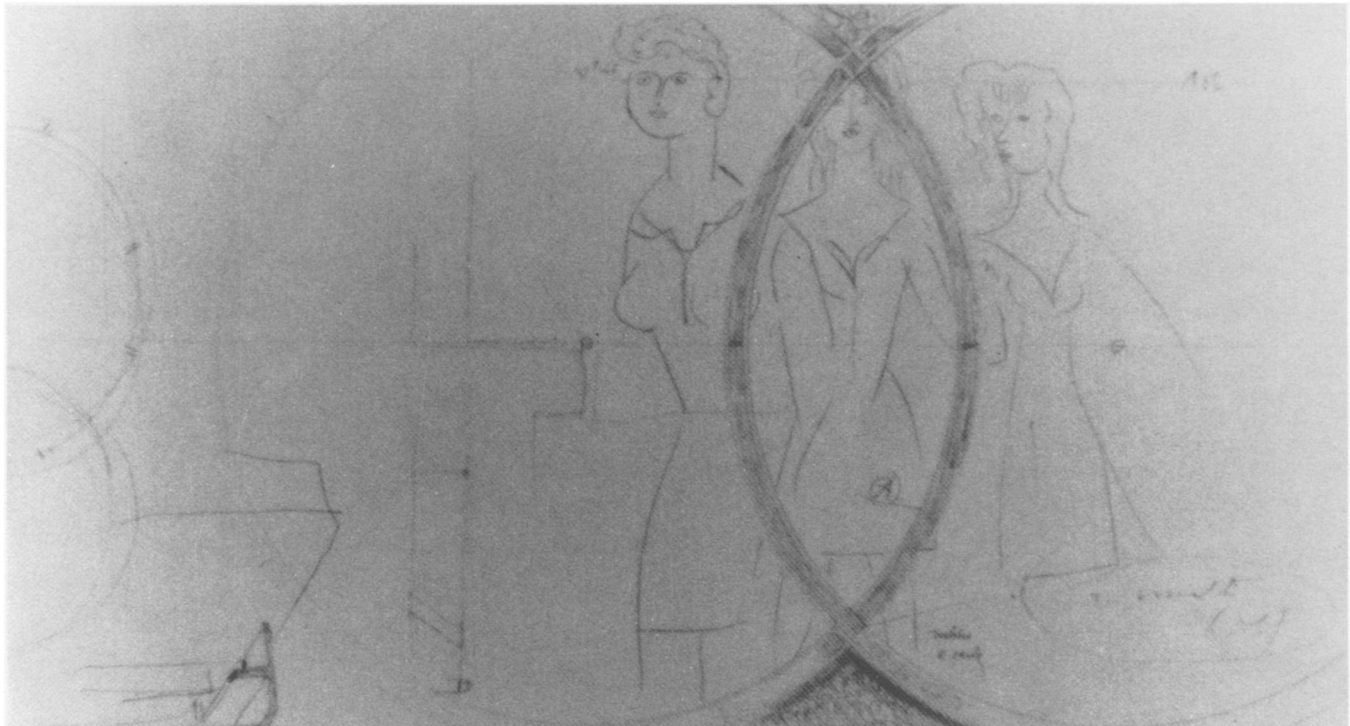


Figure 15. Carlo Scarpa. Sketch for the crossed ring window. Entry, Brion Cemetery, Elevation.

dimensional representation into panels to three-dimensional movement—for seeing the works of art. Here there is a play to discern the predominant form of architectural disposition between the real and virtual (conceptualized?) figures of a constructed environment. The geometric characteristics of the figures' composition delineated in the paintings become the *forma eximia*; the other figures are momentary appearances. The dancer and the mask are elements borrowed from the theater—the supreme form of human representation. They are the *corpi incerti* and dynamic of the space of an exhibition, a representation of a representation.

Scarpa celebrates the dynamic condition of the human presence in a sequence of study drawings for the covered footbridge that links the *Mastio* to the *Reggia* in the Museum of Castelvecchio in Verona. In a drawing showing one of the first solutions for the suspended passage, two female figures are represented on the inside of the transverse section (fig. 18). One is a female nude shown from the back and walking with a certain majesty. The other is a feminine bust with sketchy bosom, looking out of the continuous window

that delimits the passage toward the courtyard. These two figures indicate the two major architectural problems Scarpa faced in his search for the solution to the brief suspended passage, a dynamic joint between the two parts that compose the Castelvecchio Museum. The nude seen from the back indicates the dynamic kinaesthetic of the passage: the majestic stride is manifestation of the resonant step on a sound box created in the space between the pavement and the external covering that accommodates the carrying structure, which is made with stone slabs suspended on a third level. The frontal head demonstrates the problem of looking out, an act of reorientation necessary at that point in the museological path. To capture the eye of the passing visitor, an anomaly is inserted into the composition: the upper edge of the internal windowsill covers the view of the lower frame of the fixture. In the drawing of the transverse section of this passage, the resonant slabs of the pavement are no longer a problem; they are set up over the mitered edges of the cement slab of the parapet and of an intermediate beam. The problem of looking out, however, required further thought (fig. 19). The visual

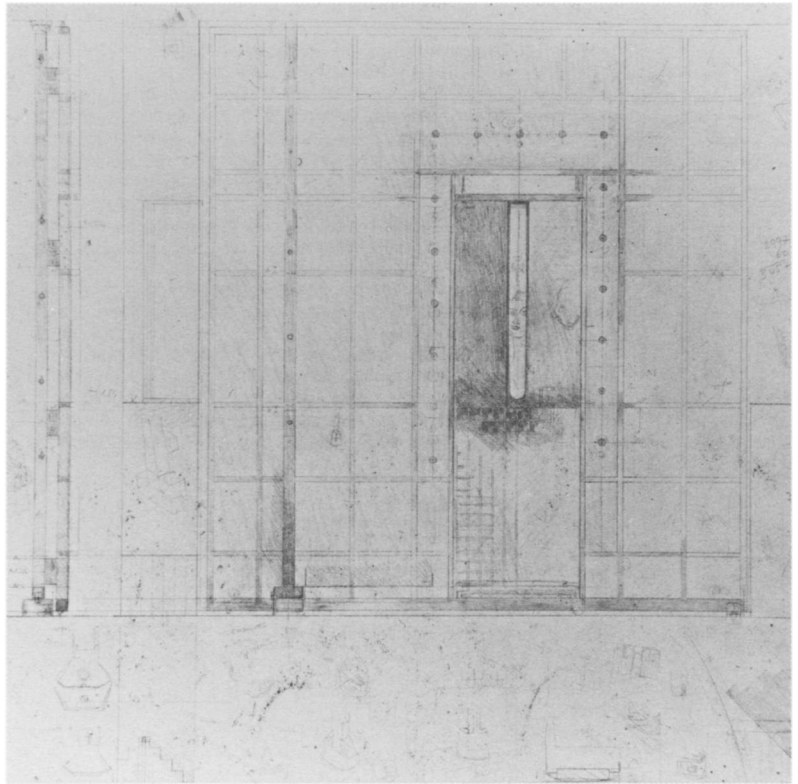


Figure 16. Carlo Scarpa. Interior Door of the Chapel, Brion Cemetery.

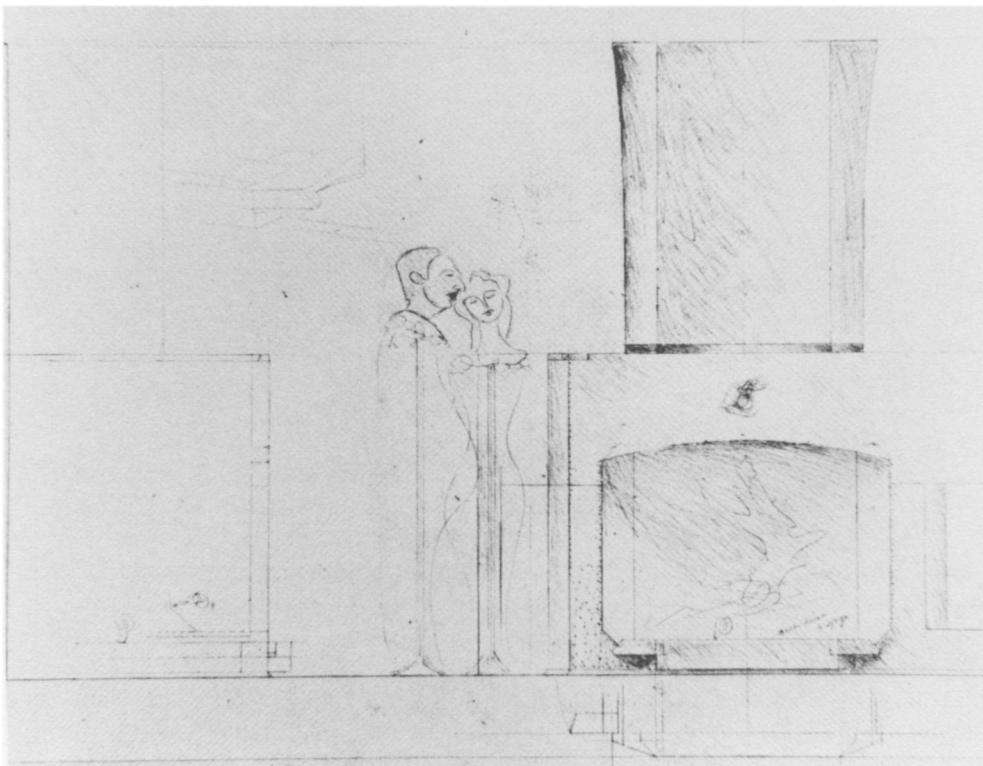


Figure 17. Carlo Scarpa. Fireplace, Casa Balboni, Elevation and Section.

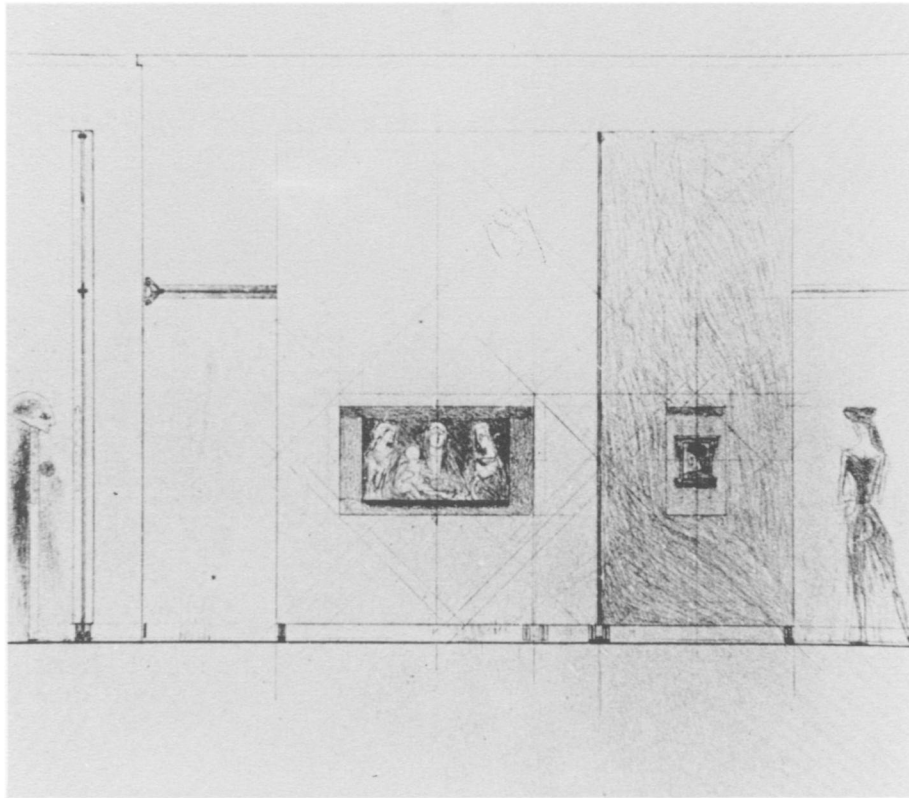


Figure 18. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing for exhibition panels, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Elevation and Section.

line generated by the upper edge of the internal windowsill is linked to the eye of the head with its Renaissance profile. The head is positioned in counterpoint to the circle created by the rotation of the internal fixture. Simple human attention is at the base of this ultimate architectural meditation; the concern that, in the act of opening the window for ventilation or cleaning, there is the danger of banging one's head during the rotation of the glass panels of the fixture. This consideration leads to the creation of a panel with an inclined edge that gently averts the risky circle of rotation. The small head is the expression of this final reflection, in which the windowsill edge results as much from the reality of the idea as from the mechanics of construction.

This interaction between fact and reality as an excuse for the ingenuities of an architectural machine is celebrated by Scarpa in a studio drawing prepared for

his own *Personale* in the *Mostra Ambiente* at the Thirty-fourth Venice Biennale (fig. 20). Scarpa's idea of the architectural machine does not arise from a Corbusian *esprit*, but relies on an inventiveness, as of the *Proti* of the Venice Arsenal. The drawing of the Scarpian machine is a section and represents the part of the show dedicated to the exhibition of his own architectural *oeuvre*. The dominant motif is a movable beam, a mechanism that localizes objects in space by its rotation. The line of rotation created by the ends of the beam and by the counterweight located at three-quarters of its total length is the recognized matrix of the dimensional and spatial order of the room of the exhibition. In the drawing of the longitudinal section a figure of a young girl evidences the importance of this geometry, not solidified, but present in the construction; it is the face with its receding outline set against the circle generated by the trajectory of the

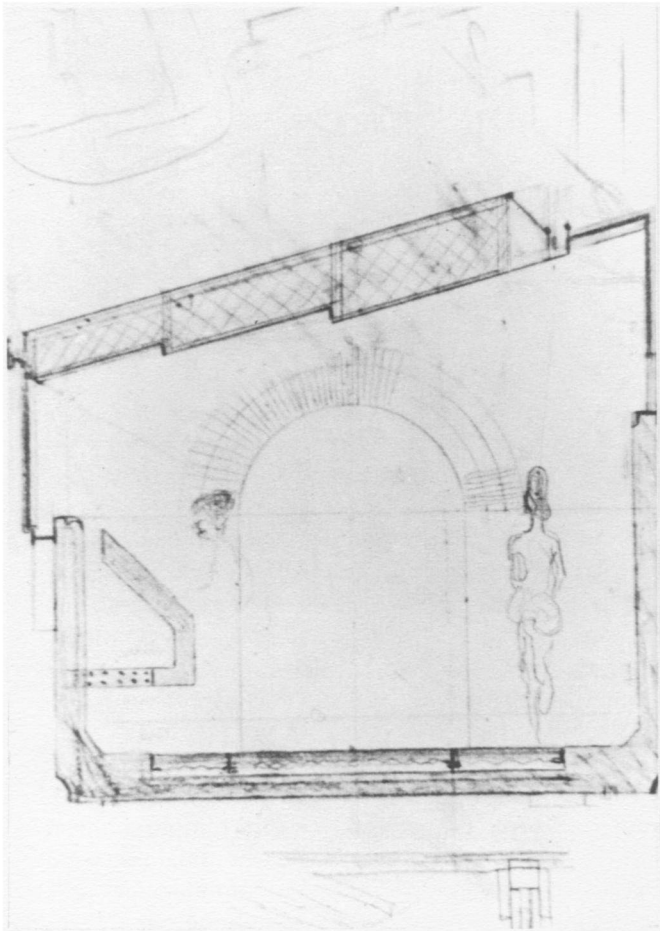


Figure 19. Carlo Scarpa. Passage between the Reggia and the Mastio, Castelvecchio di Verona.

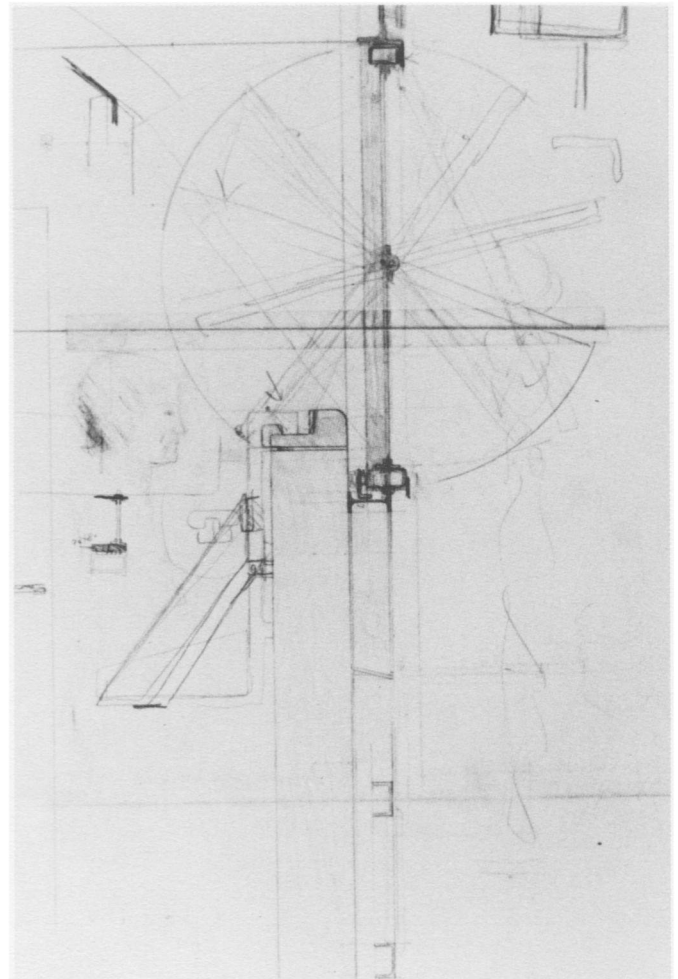


Figure 20. Carlo Scarpa. Detail of the Wall of the Passage between the Reggia and the Mastio, Castelvecchio di Verona. Section.

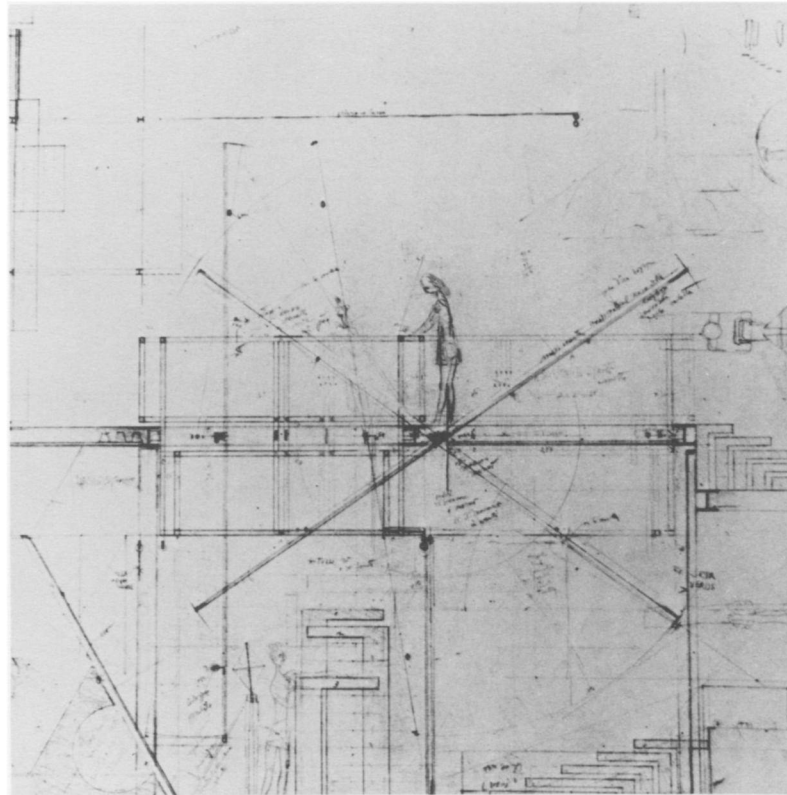


Figure 21. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing for the design of his personal exhibition, Biennale 1968, Longitudinal Section.

intermediate counterweight. The beam is mounted on a platform-scale joint so that it has an oscillating movement from the plane of rotation. In the transverse section a figure of partially indeterminate outline reacts to the final possibility of movement by withdrawing brusquely, but at the same time grasping the railing and assuming a dynamic position. Just as this beam is dynamic, the lower counterweight is the *oiseau bleu qui dorme* (fig. 21).

Scarpa makes similar use of the figure of the circle—related to the movements of the architectural machine—in his plan for the tomb-chapel of the Galli family in the Monumental cemetery in Genoa. The generating figures of the plan are the stretched-out bodies of the parents and the dead son. The commission touched Scarpa particularly, especially the fact that the young Galli was the first Italian child kept alive by a pacemaker. The circle and the square of the composition of the plan became the absolute motif of

the reality of death expressed in an architectural artifact (figs. 22, 23). Scarpa in fact defines the fundamental terms of the architectural machine, affirming that “the funerary tabernacle for the Galli family represents the extremely essential structure that agrees with the idea of the absolute that comes with death.” In the elaborate images drawn by Scarpa for this plan, the architectural absolute is restored to its original dimensions. In the studio drawing of the tabernacle, the analogical thought in plan uses the human body as the “symmetrical” base from which the “proportions” are born. In these drawings—the only ones where he represents human figures in plan—Scarpa has regenerated and reinterpreted the proportional process of the so-called Vitruvian man. The outstretched body of the youth becomes the origin of the geometry of the square and the circle, and the localization of the center is extremely significant. What is only a tension in the representation of the Vitruvian Man by Cesare

Cesariano (1521: 45) is, in Scarpa's drawings, realized (fig. 24). In a summation of iconological references recalling to mind (physiognomies of) Medieval and Renaissance saints or modern notations of the Neo-Primitives, the figure of the young Galli interacts with the figures of the mother and the father to determine the transformation of the plan to the elevation of this architectural machine. The bodies of the parents superimposed orthogonally over the body of their son are parallel to one another and to the façade of the tabernacle. This disposition of bodies establishes in this simple but powerful block of stone an ancient symbol of salvation—the opening of the TAU (figs. 25, 26). This opening in the form of TAU is the result of the proportional openings that introduce the bodies into the block of stone. Its operation is guillotinelike; it will be opened and closed three times, then the cables of the counterweights will be cut, so that the family that death has prematurely separated will be definitively reunited. In these project drawings the idea of proportion goes beyond "*ratio pro parte*"—Cicero's reductive translation of a Greek term without direct Latin equivalent—to the complete extension of the Greek concept of analogy that includes within itself a relationship of formal contiguity (Vitruvius 1960: 94 n.a.).

* * *

Thus the presence of the human figure is an indispensable requisite in contemporary architectural drawing. It not only helps us to understand the dimensions and scale of the proposed project; it is also essential for introducing into the construction a dimension in which human fact and architecture are integrated, in a poetic reality made possible by our twofold comprehension of architectural technology. From this point of view, a building is such because it is constructed by man and interpreted by means of human form. The logic of constructive technique is encompassed by the techniques of verbal logic, and the techniques of verbal logic are encompassed by the logic of constructive technique. It is a procedure that accepts the body as the most perfect and general means for attaining the architectural world. The body as reality thus becomes the basis of architectural facticity, its action/thoughts determining—through material and logical contiguity—the configuration of the constructive elements.

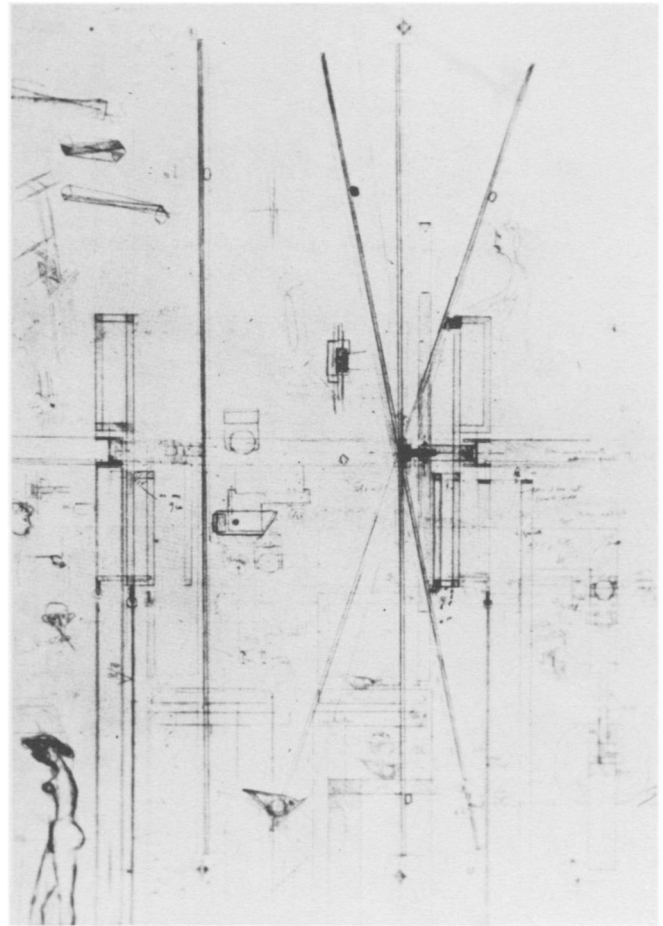


Figure 22. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing for the design of his personal exhibition, Biennale 1968, Transverse Section.

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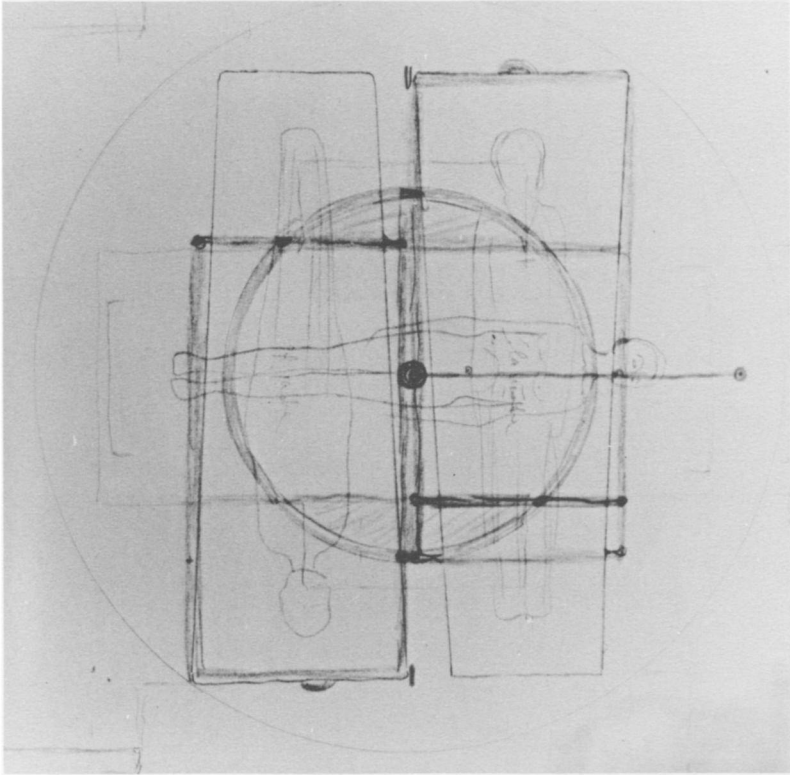


Figure 23. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing, Tomba Galli, Genoa. Plan.

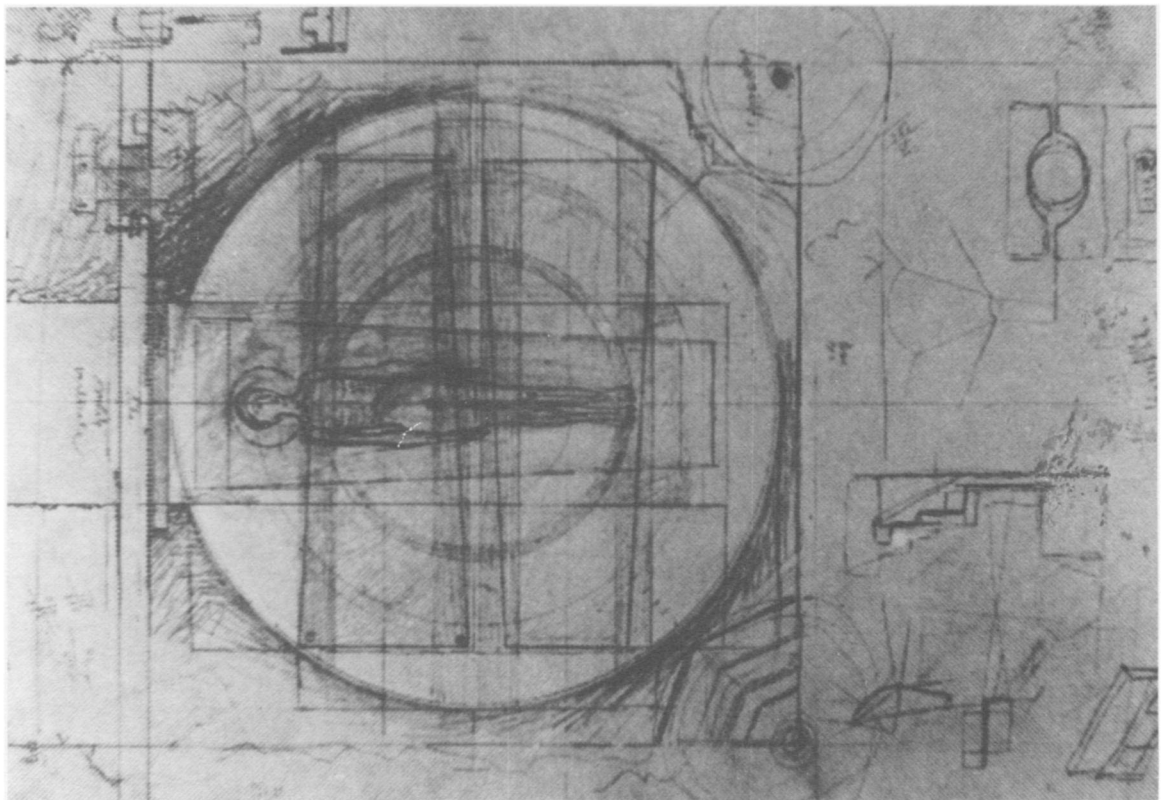


Figure 24. Cesariano Cesare. Vitruvian Man, *De Architectura*.

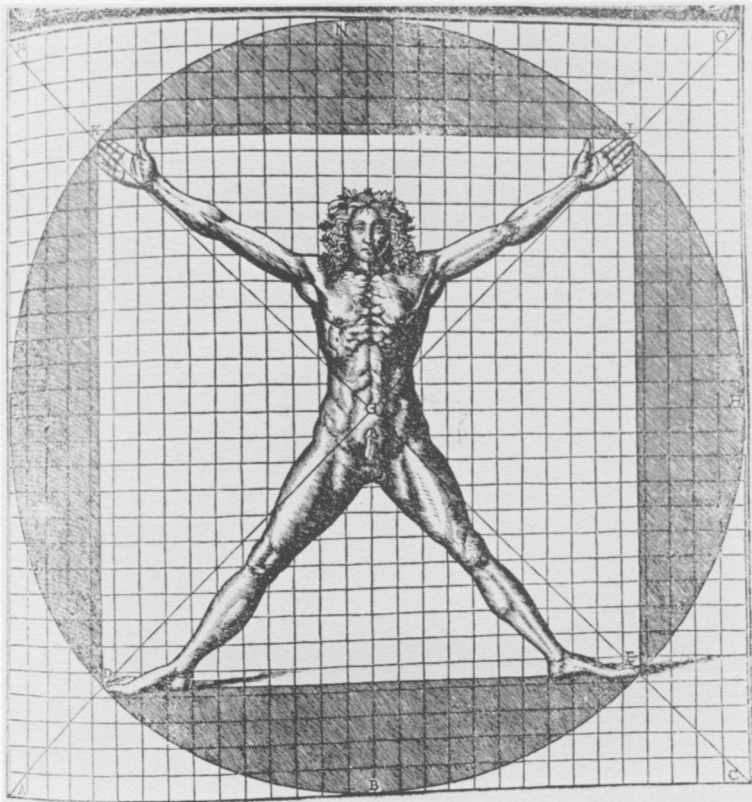


Figure 25. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing, Tomba Galli, Genoa. Plan.

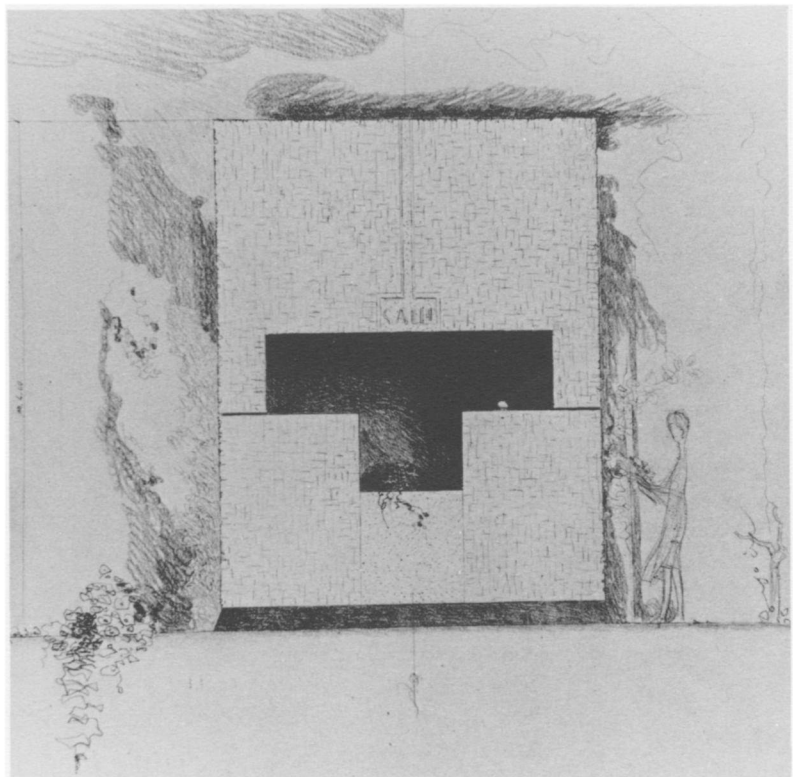


Figure 26. Carlo Scarpa. Study drawing, Tomba Galli, Genoa. Elevation.

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