

Armando Dal Fabbro\*

## THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

### PRZYSZŁOŚĆ ARCHITEKTURY

Teza prezentowana w artykule oparta jest na jakości praktyki architektonicznej i bliskiej relacji między ramą architektoniczną i strukturalną. Innymi słowy, badania nad spuścizną triady Witruwiusza i jej powrotem we współczesności polegają na relacjach pomiędzy kształtem (obrazem) architektonicznym i jego dokładnym (poprawnym) budowaniem. Esej prezentuje dalszą ideę stylu klasycznego, rozważaną nie jako okres historyczny, lecz jako potencjał dla metody działania.

*Słowa kluczowe: architektoniczna i strukturalna rama, szczerłość, czystość*

Tekst, który chcę tu przedstawić, wychodzi od architektonicznej praktyki oraz silnego związku pomiędzy formą architektoniczną i formą strukturalną. Innymi słowy poszukiwanie spuścizny po witruwiańskiej triadzie i jej ponowny zanik we współczesności wyjaśniane jest poprzez związek obrazu architektury i jej właściwej konstrukcji. Esej wprowadza jeszcze jedną ideę klasyczną, rozumianą nie jako okres historyczny, lecz możliwość dającej się zastosować metody.

*Słowa kluczowe: figura architektoniczna a figura strukturalna, autentyzm i jasność ekspresji*

The thesis I would like to present here is based on the quality of the architectural work and strong correspondence between architectural and structural figure. In other words, the research on the heritage of the Vitruvian triad and its recollapse at present is declined in the correlation between the image of architecture and its proper construction. The essay introduces another classical idea where classical is not considered as a historical period but as the potential of an operative method.

*Keywords: architectural and structural figure, expressive clarity and authenticity*

The thesis that I would like to uphold in this venue is based on the quality of the architectural doing and on the close relation (agreement) between the architectural frame and the structural frame. In other words, the research about the heritage of the Vitruvius' triad and about its relapse (spin-off) on the contemporary age is declined to a real relation between the architectural shape (image) and its exact (correct) building. The issue presents a further idea of classical style, not considered as a historical period but as the potential for an operating method (system) of approach.

*Keywords: architectural and structural frame, true genuineness and meaningful clearness*

\* Dal Fabbro Armando, prof. dr arch., Università IUAV di Venezia, Facoltà di Architettura.





I would like to take the remark from the book *Future of the classical style* written by Salvatore Settis and published by Einaudi some years ago, as a starting point for my presentation (speech).

*Every epoch*, Salvatore Settis asserts, “has invented a different idea of classical style in order to find a force and an identity. And so, the classical style concerns not only the past but the present and the future. It’s necessary to rethink about our numerous roots in order to shape (form) the world.

Today we have the possibility to know Vitruvius’ principles expressed in *De Architectura, libri decem* in virtue of the presence of his literary work and for the fact it has been an important point of reference, a fundamental presence for all the treatisers who wrote about “the art of building”: from Alberti to Palladium, from V. Scamozzi to nowadays. “The architecture of the city” written by A. Rossi, for example, can be considered as one of the last treatise of architecture, the most contemporary one.

Concerning this, I remember the incipit of the A. Rossi’s afterword for the Portuguese edition of *Architecture of the city* in which he expressed this concept: *this book is an architectural project (...)*.

*De Architectura* has been, basically, a vision of the art and of the architecture of the classical western world. In other words, Vitruvius’ work represented a special vision of the art of building, a permanent reference for those people who have undertaken a project and have a continuous comparison with the works of the past and their meanings.

Today it’s possible to say that the works we knew during the past time testify through their presence a different idea of classical style, like S. Settis underlines in his last book.

But it’s not important to talk about Vitruvius as thinker or treatiser. Today we are in this place to understand if Vitruvius principles are valid nowadays, in the post-modern, post-technical, post-urban age.

Today we are nearer to the Blade Runners than to the technological repeatability of Benjaminian memory or to the Manhattan transfer of the collectivism and of the sociological observation having roots(origin) in the Dos Passos’ impressionism. Persecuted from the cathodic bombardment of images and from their continuous clone, we are bewitched by a tricked architecture (full of)characterized by “special effects”. (using another cinematographic analogy).

The architectural culture put us in front of an alternative today. As professors and architects two ways are evident. On one hand, it is possible to rule the complex contemporaneity through a cultural neutrality produced by technological innovations and by market laws; on the other hand, it is possible to underline the artistic knowledge by virtue of that particular and fruitful complicity that is present in the world of ideas and that always links the activity of doing with the activity of the will.

On this subject, in his study on history of art, derived from Gottfried Semper’s materialistic theory, Alois Riegl introduces the concept of “*Kunst-wollen*” as “will to form”. Later on, Wilhelm Worringer in his essay *Abstraktion und Einfühlungen* develops Riegl’s concept of *Kunst-wollen* and makes it coincide with the primary moment of every artistic creation.

“We have to underline that the materialistic approach – as Worringer states – considers the primitive art as the result of three factors: functionality, raw material and technique and it can not be identified *tout court* with Gottfried Semper, as it is based on a restrictive and misleading reading of his work.

History of art was therefore interpreted as a history of *the activity of doing* (Können). Instead this new interpretation considers the history of artistic evolution as a history of the activity of the will (Wollen), and is based on the psychological assumption that the activity of doing is just a secondary consequence of the activity of the will.” (See Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlungen*, 1907).

Today we are present at the praise of scientific specialization and of technocratic ideas of those people who want to turn the modest stirrings produced through technological choices into universal resources. All the scientific achievements, expressed in any branch of learning, have a universal aim (point of view).

Cities have a universal value, they are the keepers of people's memory, of the society's vitality. The city represents a teaching for the architecture. The urban set-up (the world) is an endless source of knowledge, the plan is knowledge and the city is the place of this knowledge.

I believe that questioning architecture's limits means most of all showing the society's calling to express itself through architecture, as the ancients did. This means also valuating architecture's principles and foundations, questioning about the relation between architecture and building and about the role that today architecture still plays in city planning.

We can base architecture on the principle of will expressed by the work of art, it is both science and art of building, a tension created by two concurrent forces: what we know and what does not exist yet. Architecture is constantly balanced between two invisible forces that we can identify as *mimesis* (mimicry) and *inventio* (productive imagination).

The rational act of the architectonic doing is counterbalanced by the irrational dimension of the creative act. In this sense, the analysis on the city's monuments and the interpretation of architecture are the first step to look into the architectural phenomenon in relation with a tangible *modus operandi*.

The first cities, the first human settlements, that today we mythicize and evoke as authentic works of art, were built without a declared artistic aim; on the contrary they were founded and subsequently developed following a functional necessity and a

practical purpose. They represent *the places of an antique avant-gard* from which we can continuously find inspiration.

We begin with the signs of time, the great shapes designed in the territory, the archaic architectonic types such as the hypostyle rooms, the halls, the enclosures, and we follow the great spatial configurations of ancient architectures such as the agoras, the Roman forums and the amphitheatres. These themes are constantly reinterpreted and recur in every epoch, in the Renaissance as in modern architecture, in Palladio as in Le Corbusier.

Even today the cities relate through their architectural pieces the level of civilisation of a country, a geographical sense of belonging, the urban society's vitality in choosing the city as the medium of humanity. Some of these flourished, others disappeared and were devoured by time. Nevertheless the signs, the traces left by those monuments, despite their different destinies, are still here to indicate a collective purpose for the city's urban space and the role that architecture plays in building a city.

José Ortega y Gasset, the great Spanish philosopher who lived in the beginning of the last century, said that it was necessary to oppose the dispersion and the complexity of the scientific work through the concentration and the simplification of knowledge.

To simplify in order to create wealth and to concentrate in order to synthesize.

*As a science comes to ideas that require technical abilities, (...) this means that ideas are losing their basic peculiarity.*

As teachers and research workers, we have to be ready to relance the students' potentials in order to underline the recovered culture of ideas. For this reason our students don't have to specialize in a science, in one and only discipline; but they have to create a complete knowledge.