

Rafael Moneo

Translated by Angela Giral

There is no question for the editors of *Oppositions* but that the face of architecture of 1975 is radically altered from that of 1965. Equally, there can be little argument that a significant contribution to that difference is the concept of autonomous architecture. It can be seen now to be one of the few ideas capable of articulation internationally which has reached this country since World War II, and perhaps it will be of as much consequence as the functionalist doctrines of the early Modern Movement. Its potential to be of some relevance here is perhaps aided by the fact that there is little one could call direction in either the schools, or in our present program of building.

With this set of articles, *Oppositions* brings to its English-speaking readers, for the first time, the work of Aldo Rossi. The article by Rafael Moneo was written in 1973 before the Triennale of September 1973, and thus before the exhibition mounted by Rossi and his followers which codified the notion of autonomous architecture in the form of the neo-rationalist *Tendenza*. The article presents two of the themes central to Rossi's work. First, there is the concept of the relationship of architecture to the city and second, the concept of an autonomous architecture expressed in the development of a typology of relationships between architecture and the city. Neither one of these themes is new; both having a long history in European architecture. What seems of relevance in these

ideas is the particular juxtaposition of an autonomy which is developed from an analysis of the structure of the city. That is, one understands what architecture is from an analysis of those things in the urban fabric which architecture is not.

Moneo makes the connection between the two aspects inherent in Rossi's work by breaking the article into two dialectic halves; each with its own theme and its own rhythm and cadence. The first part, which dissects Rossi's thinking in his book *L'Architettura e La Città*, is intense; the second part, which examines Rossi's project for the Modena cemetery, is lyrical. For me, this is architectural writing at its best — dense and informative, analytic and questioning. There is no question but that Rossi's metaphysics demand this kind of dissection.

Equally important for the European context is the fact that such an article by Moneo, who is one of the Barcelona group of the magazine *Arquitecturas Bis*, signals a possible change in the Milan/Barcelona axis: from the influence in the early sixties of Vittorio Gregotti and post-war functionalism to the new ideology present in Rossi's work.

What remains in question, ten years after Rossi's book, is whether 'architettura autonomia' is merely another architect's smokescreen, as Functionalism was, for 'aesthetic free-play'. This question persists because the forms of this 'autonomous

architecture', as Rossi and others of the so-called *Tendenza* exhibit, have such a marked preference for a neoclassical style.

And now this autonomous architecture has acquired the moral benefaction accruing to the label of 'rationalism' and, with the broom of the *Tendenza*, has swept up the metaphysical Scolari, the romantic Krier brothers, the delirious Koolhaas, etc.

And who will dare cry in the face of all of this — Formalism!
PDE

Rafael Moneo was born in Tudela, Spain, in 1937. He graduated in architecture in 1961. Between 1958-1961 he worked in the office of Saenz Oiza and from 1961 to 1962 in the office of Jorn Utzon. After living in Rome as a Fellow of the Spanish Academy he returned to Spain in 1965 to start his own professional practice and to teach at the School of Madrid. In 1971 he obtained a Professorship at the School of Architecture in Barcelona where he is presently teaching while maintaining his private practice in Madrid.

This essay, published here for the first time in English, was originally published in Spanish (José Rafael Moneo Valles, La Idea de Arquitectura en Rossi y el Cementerio de Modena [Barcelona: Ediciones de la ETSAB]).

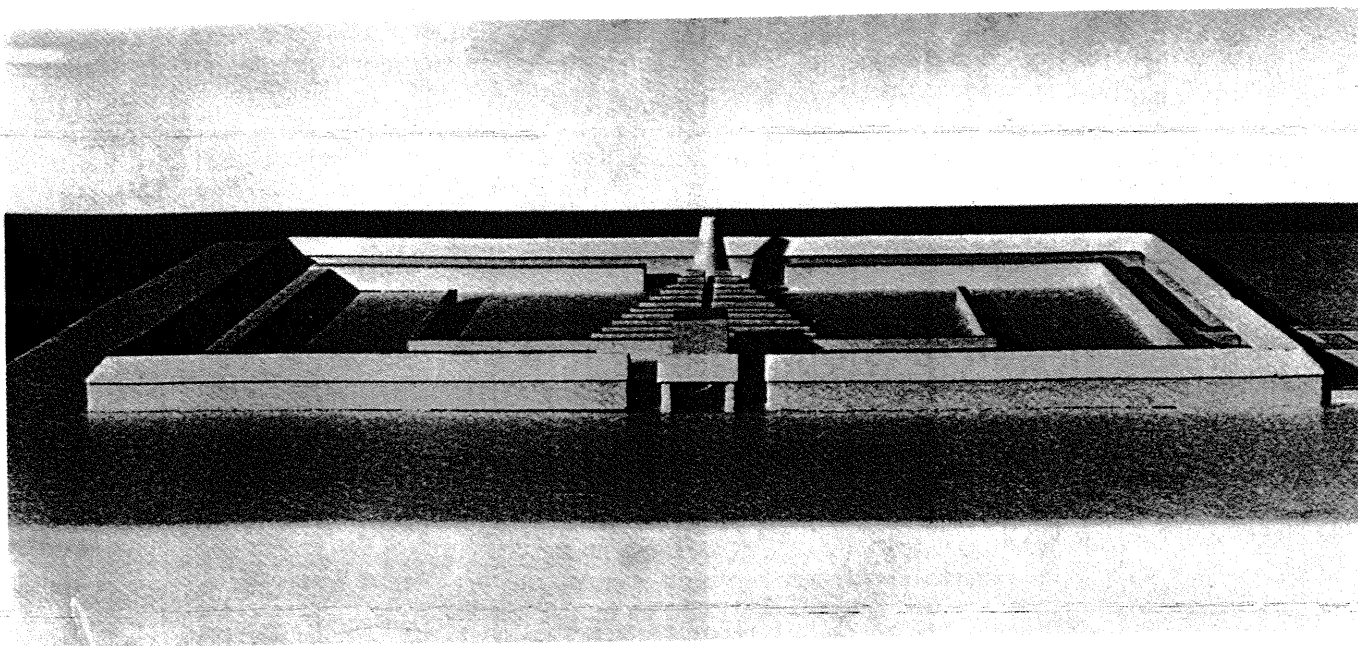
1. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy.*
Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Model.

2. *Cover of Casabella-Continuità,*
1953-1954.

3. *Aldo Rossi.*

4. *Cover of Aldo Rossi's book,*
L'Architettura della Città, 1966.

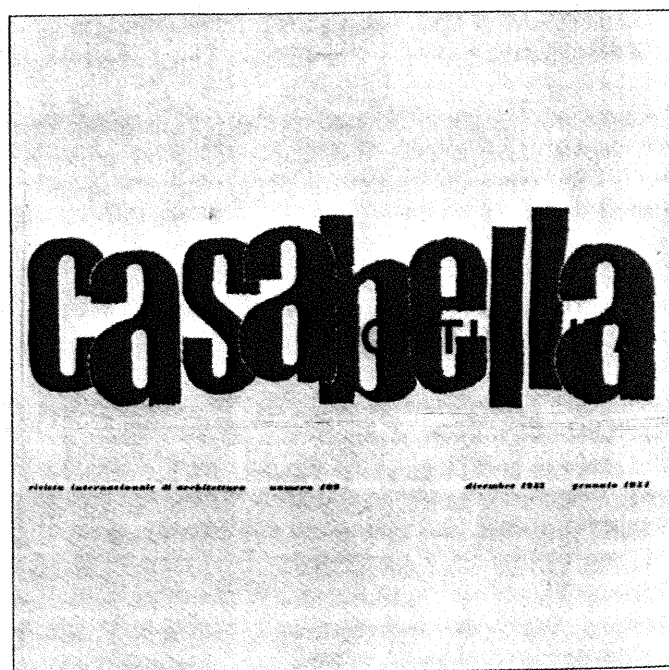
106



1.



3.



2.



4.

The recent competition for the Modena Cemetery (fig. 1), published in 1972 in *Casabella* (no. 372) and *Controspazio* (no. 10), consolidated and reinforced the movement known as "La Tendenza" (literally in English the "tendency") initiated some years ago by a group of Italian architects headed by Aldo Rossi. Because the Tendenza has ceased to be an isolated proposition and has become an architectural ideal shared and assimilated by a great number of professionals, we are forced to consider and examine the Modena project in depth, and to question its meaning in the context of not only the Tendenza but also other current architectural ideologies. This is not merely because of the intrinsic value of Rossi's winning design, but also because of its concern for how a system of thought can confront the problem of design and its realization in built form.¹

It has been a long time since the appearance of a common position with both a coherent and continuous view of architecture. Such a position can be seen both in the projects for the Modena competition and in the work of students in the Italian architectural schools, published in *Controspazio* and *Casabella*. Perhaps not since the early sixties, when neo-liberty seemed to be of major interest in Italy, has there been a situation similar to this one.

The first thing which must be acknowledged is that the Tendenza is supported by a common ideology, by the same theoretical basis, rather than by mere personal affinities. Insofar as these theoretical propositions are intelligible and are clearly formulated, they have a certain value in that they can generate both a homogeneous architecture and one which can be differentiated from all others. This is obvious in the publications already mentioned. Outside of what is to be expected from a personal affinity, a common position is evident in the works of Rossi, Grassi, Aymonino, Dardi, Bonicalzi and Pracchi, Marzoli and Vizzi, etc. One could even expand the list by including all those spattered by the label "Tendenza." But there is no doubt about Aldo Rossi's fundamental role in the development of this ideology. Let us then use Rossi and his writings to characterize the Tendenza and to show the continuity between his theory and practice, as it is manifest specifically in the design for the cemetery.

Rossi (fig. 3), who has taught in Zurich and in Venice, worked with Ernesto Rogers, Vittorio Gregotti, Mario Zanuso, Tentori, etc., on *Casabella* (fig. 2) in the early fifties and sixties. It is interesting today to reread the pages of *Casabella* to understand the value of these people who detected so many future problems. In many masterful issues, the work of minor architects was examined and themes were presented that had been previously undervalued and completely left out of traditional history. Already, at that time, it was a magazine which was an anathema for Reyner Banham's defense of neo-liberty; a position which, in those days, was a break with the accepted indiscriminating orthodoxy of the Modern Movement. Within the framework of an Italy of the fifties and the sixties the attitude of the then young editors of *Casabella* surrounding Rogers, led to a less elementary architecture than before; one which could allow for the complexity of reality. The editors had become conscious that a moralistic posture which would allow an understanding of the evolution of architecture through Manichaen glasses was not possible. This attitude ultimately led to a confrontation with those who understood the Modern Movement from an exclusively plastic point of view. From this a fundamental principle developed slowly in the work of Rossi and in the entire group: the idea that there was a specificity or a particular aspect of architecture which could allow it to be considered as an autonomous discipline. It was Rossi's idea that through a study of the city, seen as the finest and most complete expression of architecture, a knowledge of these principles could be found. This autonomy of architecture and the special quality of its principles becomes clear upon an explanation of the form of the city. The idea is that the problems which arise on trying to understand the form of the city have not been resolved, neither by the highly abused organic metaphors, nor by the most current model theory. However, for Rossi, the study of the city and its formal problems should be approached from the perspective of a discipline which is best equipped to grasp their meaning; and that discipline is architecture. It is from the unusual and unique principles of architecture that the form of the city can be explained; understanding the city and its morphology (which is the same as saying its birth or its evolution), requires a knowledge of the principles of

architecture which govern the form of the city.

The most outstanding feature of the *Tendenza* can be clarified in the following manner. The Modern Movement, and in particular the historiography of the Modern Movement, can be seen as insisting on the figurative aspects of architecture, in an attempt to establish a continuity between architecture and the other fine arts, thus reducing the specific value of architecture itself. On the other hand, Rossi can be seen to defend the legitimacy and independence of the principles which govern the practice of architecture itself. To discover these principles, and to determine how they are incorporated into the process of the production of architecture, and the creation of the city, he says, should be the task of any theoretical discussion of architecture. Research in architecture thus leads to the study of the specific aspects of architecture which allow it to be understood as an autonomous discipline, not assimilated within sculpture or painting; a discipline that cannot be understood exclusively through external parameters but which can be established through appropriate formal rules. Through the idea of autonomy, necessary to the understanding of the form of the city, architecture becomes a category of reality. Rossi, like Alberti, Scamozzi, and the architects of the Enlightenment, defends architecture as an expression of thought. The task of architecture, then, would be the explanation and conversion of this thought into reality. But is it possible to think of architecture as an autonomous discipline? Isn't this perhaps a mere fantasy? Let us see how Rossi himself explains this autonomy and where his theoretical propositions lead within the idea of the city as architecture.

The Architecture of the City

Rossi's ideas are systematically exhibited in his book, *The Architecture of the City* (fig. 4). Some of his concepts have been elaborated with greater depth in other writings — the CLUVA notebooks,² the studies on the city of Padova,³ a preface to the works of Boullée,⁴ etc. But one can say that his architectonic thought has been more systematically developed in this book in spite of its being a somewhat dated text.

Since the purpose of this article is the understanding of the connection between Rossi's thought and his work, or alternatively to see how the thought is converted into work, we can use *The Architecture of the City* as a first analog or a model for this thought. Rossi begins his book with the following: "The city, which is the object of this book, is understood within it as architecture. When I speak of architecture I don't mean exclusively the visible image of the city and the whole of its architecture, but rather architecture as construction. I refer to the construction of the city in time."⁵

The development and growth of the city is subject to certain rules and forms which allow for its "construction," which is its architecture. This idea of architecture as construction makes us understand architecture as that discipline or that field of knowledge within the real, which gives a realization to the city. Naturally, from the very beginning, one must avoid the temptation to understand construction in terms of structure and of building: for Rossi, to construct is simply to act on the basis of reason, not, as one might think, to materialize thought.

Thus, from the beginning of the book, Rossi has announced the aspects of the specificity of the discipline of architecture; that is, to understand how the city is constructed, how it is produced from architecture, and how it forces the establishment of an autonomous discipline that will be aided by "the analysis of political, social and economic systems,"⁶ but at the same time cannot rely solely on them.

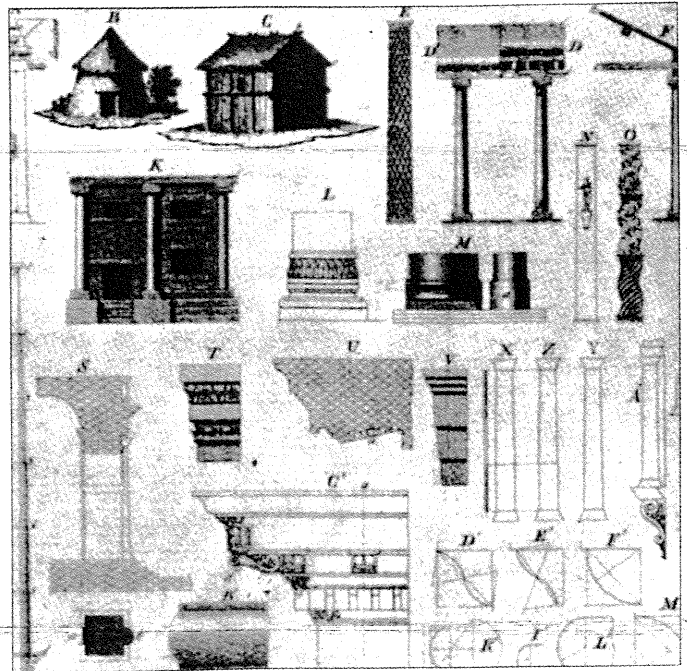
First, Rossi begins a description of the elements from which the city is constructed. Once the elements have been established it is possible to grasp the laws by which they are composed and through which they create a more complex reality — the city. For Rossi, the experience of the city is what permits the discovery of these elements, and identification of them as urban facts, as a "unicum," having value in the whole as well as individually as form, in a particular place. These elements are intelligible through memory, not through remembering. This kind of extreme analytic suspension gives us a fleeting glimpse of the *raison d'être* of the city. On the basis of these elements, we must

“understand the city as a great representation of the human condition.”⁷ We will attempt to read, “representation through its fixed and profound scenery, architecture.”⁸ But the wish to clarify, to order the elements with which the city is constructed, leads Rossi to present “the fundamental hypothesis of the book . . . the study of a typology of buildings in relation to the city.”⁹

It is not necessary to underline the importance that the concept of typology has had in Italian theoretical studies of architecture. But we should make clear the discovery of the validity of this concept, whether it be for the analysis of the city or as point of departure for certain approaches to design, such as in that of Rossi, Aymonino, Grassi or Scolari. In fact, what we have is merely the reincorporation of a concept that had been forgotten by a previous generation of critics who were more attentive to purely visual principles such as *Gestalt* and cultural considerations. These critics considered that the eclectic treatises had used typology improperly: typology was, for most modern critics, an old-fashioned concept. But it was more than a rescue operation that was performed by Rossi. Rather it was the affirmation of a new idea of architecture that attributed a greater value to its capacity as an autonomous discipline with internal norms, than to the personalist dictatorship that had been the end result of much that went by the name of Modern Architecture. It was, if we may be allowed such an oversimplification, a matter of attributing greater value to architecture than to architects.

Rossi picks up, as does Argan (fig. 5), the definition of type, so often quoted, from Quatremère de Quincy, “the word type does not represent so much the image of something that must be copied or imitated perfectly, as the idea of an element that must itself serve as a rule for the model. . . . The model, understood from the point of view of the practical execution of art, is an object that must be repeated such as it is; the type, on the contrary, is an object on the basis of which everyone can conceive of works that may not resemble each other at all.”¹⁰

Type is something constant, it is what remains beyond the particular and the concrete, something that appears during



5.

the examination of architectural facts and gives them support: "a structure that is revealed and made knowledgeable through the fact itself. . . ." Rossi condenses this idea when he says: "no type can be identified with a particular form, but all architectural forms can be referred to types."¹¹

One can examine the entire history of architecture from the concept of typology, from the temple to the suburban house: through type we can explain the formation of the city. "We can say that type is the idea itself of architecture, that which is closest to its essence and therefore what, in spite of change, has always imposed itself 'over feeling and reason' as the principle of architecture and the city."¹²

The introduction of the concept of type will allow Rossi to make a new kind of classification which will become a necessary tool for the interpretation, through fragmentation, of the city. This type of classification comes close to the one employed by a botanist in his examination of plant life.

However, before proceeding, it is necessary to recall the architectonic category of permanence which Rossi associates with memory. There are, in the city, urban facts which are permanent, that withstand the passage of time; these urban facts are the monuments that, in one way or another, constitute or make up and configure the city. The monument therefore has more than an intelligible and atmospheric value, it is not only architecture as anecdote, as the picturesque, but it gives meaning to the life of the city which, through these monuments, both remembers the past and uses 'its memory.'

The monument, which again has been underestimated by the preceding generation of critics because of its singularity and its rhetoric, is restored by Rossi who understands the role the monument has played in giving structure to the city. Faced with such a conservative view of the past, Rossi achieves a vindication of the presence of monuments insofar as they also embody the current moment — the city's present.

The recovery of monuments then is far from a merely archaeological devotion to the past. Monuments from the

perspective proposed by Rossi acquire a real dimension and an immediacy that disturbs any conservative vision of the city described in terms of immobility and inalterability.

Thus, we could say that the concept of typology allows Rossi to establish a continuity between type and form, so that one is able to understand the formation of the city in terms of what he calls "areas" or "sectors" through such a concept of type (fig. 6). These sectors are seen as pieces not defined by their sociological identity but by a formal condition which responds to morphologically similar sectors. The city is thus understood as a homogeneous continuum in which diversity is not accidental but, on the contrary, something appropriate to its roots; and history, the city's memory, takes care of the given sense to that diversity.

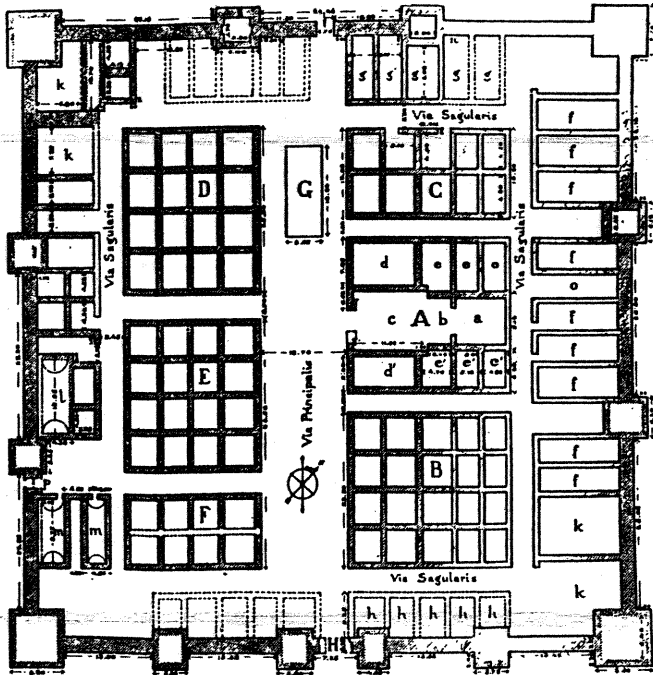
Thus it happens that "the monument is something permanent because it is already in a dialectic position within urban development, permitting an understanding of the city as something that is created through points (primary elements) and areas (neighborhoods); and while it acquires value as such through the form, it disappears in the latter from which the value of use comes forth."¹³

Furthermore, Rossi considers "the plan as a primary element, just as a temple or a fortress";¹⁴ it is the way one thinks of a city, the way it is first recorded in our mind and from this imposes an architectonic reflection.

At the same time, urban facts express their content, their life, their destiny: "Visit an asylum: pain there is something concrete. It is to be found in the courtyards, in the walls, in the rooms."¹⁵ Rossi quotes Levi-Strauss and says that "space possesses its own value; just as sound and perfume have color and feeling."¹⁶

And thus appears place; individualized, concrete space. The site, which Rossi has called "the concrete sign of space."¹⁷ Rossi says, referring to urban facts: "sometimes I have asked myself, as I again do here, where the individuality of an urban fact begins, whether it is in form, in function, in memory or in something else. We might then say it is in the event itself and in the sign that fixed the event."¹⁸ It is

6. Roman fortifications, *Dagantya, Jordan*. These elements constitute a type of urban form.



6.

therefore understood that each situation, each event whose recollection is retained in memory, has a corresponding architectonic answer; a sign which fixes it whether it be from the public domain or from a concrete, individual, private domain. Place allows every architecture to acquire its condition of being, allows it to achieve the dimension of the individual, which as we have seen is necessary for the identification of an urban fact. But place alludes also to a collective support; place means, or can be understood through, the collective.

11

The principles of architecture will become concrete in a place, in a certain time, whether in the city, or in the landscape. Architecture cannot be made ignoring these realities which give it a sense of place and of history.

The idea of place encompasses something deeper, more rooted in geography itself, in the physical reality that underlies history; place, from which urban facts acquire meaning, is something more than the environment.

One should remember, however, an exception: it is sometimes the role of symbols to condense in architecture the world of desire, "architecture and its principles are summarized in symbol; and on the other hand there is the condition for building — motivation."¹⁹

It is the difference between architecture and urban fact, between principles and concrete construction, which allows us to make a value judgment about architecture. Rossi says, "precisely what composition and style want to say about architecture, is that architecture becomes a determining factor in the constitution of urban facts when it is able to assume the entire civil and political dimension of an era; when it is highly rational, comprehensible and transmissible. In other words, when it can be judged as style."²⁰

Therefore, when a style is achieved, architecture is embodied in an urban fact: "the identification of some urban facts and of the city itself with style in architecture is so immediate that it can be found in a certain environment of space/time with discreet precision in the Gothic city, in the Baroque city, in the Neo-Classic city."²¹

The failure of most current urban designs is because of a conception of the city in terms of architectural design, which does not consider the notion of an architecture of the city. It is necessary to rethink building from the form of the city or, better yet, from how it forms the city. To a certain extent, building makes one consider all the prior morphological problems that demand both a knowledge of place and a certain interpretation of history before it can aspire to be an urban fact, and thus become a city. This way of understanding things "contradicts the belief held by many that pre-ordered functions can give the necessary direction to facts and that the problem consists in giving form to certain functions: in reality the forms themselves, in their materialization, separate the function; they are stated as the city itself."²² Building must become an urban fact. This particular way of understanding urban fact as form is therefore the area in which the architect works, thus the architect's effort is directed to realize "the importance of the form and of the logical processes of architecture while eing in the form itself the capacity for assuming value, meaning, and the most diverse uses."²³ The problem of architecture, and of understanding the city in its fullest dimension, can only be solved when the logic of its form is understood. Use or function can only be solved through the logic of form itself.

The objection that this line of thought can only be applied to old cities can be dismantled if one considers that the proposed hypotheses do not distinguish between old and new cities; on the other hand, the city is always making references to the past insofar as "one of the characteristics of the city is its permanence in time."²⁴ On the contrary one must insist on the observation of the public and collective nature of the city, "such a beauty rests both in the laws of architecture and in the choice in value that the collective wishes to give for these works."²⁵ This collective nature explains the value of history: "the city is a repository of history."²⁶ As a result of this primal encounter with man, the city even today, bears traces of the conversion of this physical environment into place.

The city is faithful to its own "memory," a term that Maurice Halbwachs already applied to the city. "The city is

the *locus* of collective memory. Memory thus becomes . . . the conducting thread of the entire complex structure . . . the collective nature and the individuality of urban facts arrange themselves into the same urban structure. Within this structure memory becomes the conscience of the city."²⁷

Evolution of Urban Facts

To understand how urban facts are produced in time, and to understand their evolution, we must add a new and fundamental dimension that will help us grasp the dynamics of the city; we mean by this, the economic component. Urban facts are produced under the pressure of economic phenomena and in some way become their reflection. The work of Halbwachs, according to Rossi, is enormously clarifying in this respect.²⁸ The history of the city is full of episodes in which economic circumstances, such as the unwanted liberation of the land, force and push the evolution of the city. From this perspective, as can be expected given Rossi's political position, he can be seen to link up with a materialistic and dialectic vision of history.

This is why plans either conform or do not conform to reality depending on the circumstance. For example, Haussmann's plan offered an interpretation of the structure of Paris from a very concrete point of view. However, Paris conformed to Haussmann's plan from other perspectives without considering Haussmann's intentions.

One can say that in some way all European cities, throughout the nineteenth century, were conscious when making such decisive interventions in their infra-structure, of a latent new city form brought about by industry (fig. 7).

The problem of the city, Rossi says, grows out of "the end to political and physical homogeneity which followed the coming of industry . . . a first stage can be discerned in the destruction of the fundamental structure of the medieval city based in absolute identity between dwelling and workplace within the same building."²⁹ The breakdown of the duality, dwelling/work, whose continuity was taken for

granted until the appearance of industry, would then be responsible for the current disjunction that has turned the problem of the city into a problem of housing, with its well-known social implications. Rossi says, "the second, decisive, stage begins with progressive industrialization provoking the definitive split between residence and work and destroying the relationships of neighborhood."³⁰ Rossi continues that "the third phase in the changing city starts with the beginning of individual means of transportation."³¹ Here Rossi must face an objection: the attempt to look at how "the new dimension" might change the substance of urban facts: that is to say, the new scale. Does it not destroy a theory of the classic city? Once more, Rossi's classical thinking responds by admitting the continuity, the permanence, of urban facts in cities; in a timeless city, without concrete references, in a city that is so precisely from the permanence of its *raison d'être*, of its architecture.

At this point, having incorporated the economic vision of Halbwachs and Bernoulli into his dynamic interpretation of the city, Rossi must ask himself, "if the architecture of urban facts is the construction of the city how can we leave out this construction which gives it its decisive moment — politics?"³² Politics here becomes in fact a problem of choice.

In the last analysis who is it that chooses the image of the city? "The city itself, but always and only through political institutions."³³ Thus the city is realized from politics through architecture: "the city realizes, in itself, its own idea of city when it materializes in stone."³⁴

The city then becomes an autonomous entity forced to account for itself, for its history, its collective life, through memory, and realized from the logical construction of architecture that would be its way of realizing itself — its own form.

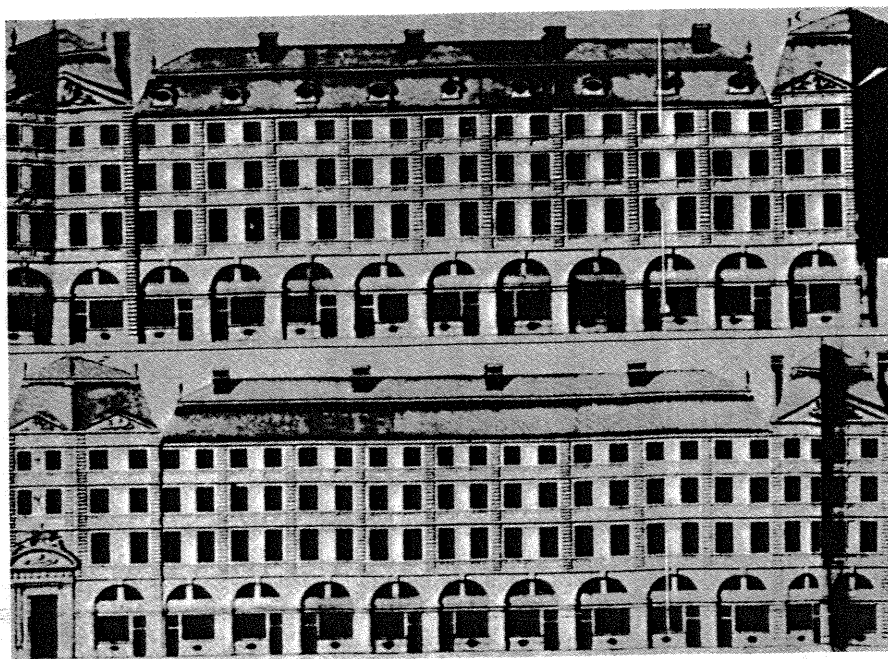
Obviously, no one can be in total disagreement with this vision of the architecture of the city as autonomous, with this assertion of the independence of formal laws. Since if there is something that architecture or the city cannot boast about, it is autonomy. Let us see it in another way from



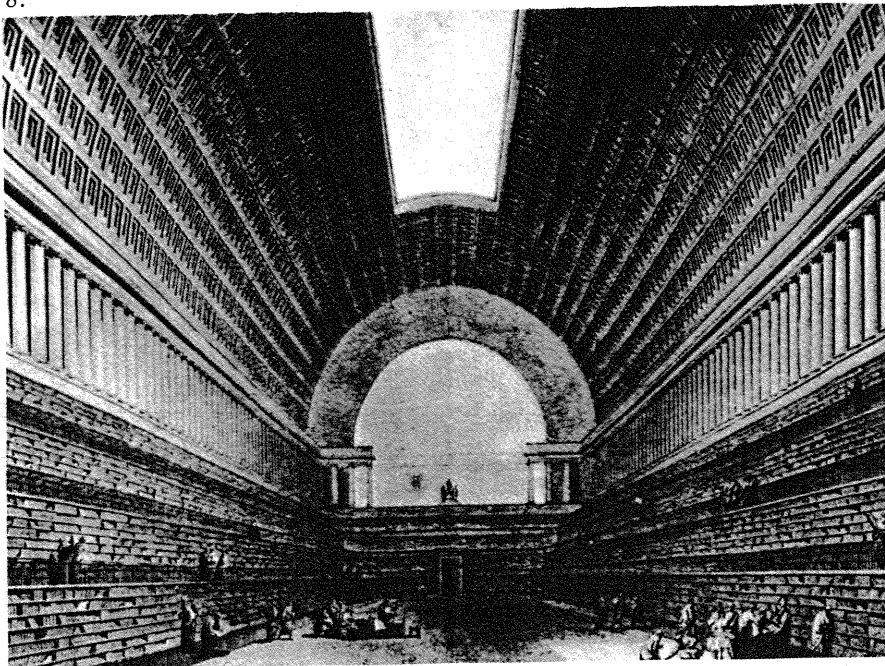
7.

8. *Rue de la Ferronnerie, Paris, 1669.*

9. *Proposed new hall for the expansion of the National Library, Paris. Etienne Louis Boullée, architect, c. 1780.*



8.



9.

Rossi's text, with this assertion of independent formal laws for the architecture of the city; while, from others points of view, if there is precisely something that architecture and city cannot boast about, it is autonomy. It is not only passionate, but also instructive, to underline the importance of formal relationships in architecture. To insist on the value of form in architecture, is a desirable antidote today when considering urban facts. A better understanding of Rossi's position, in relation to the crisis of orthodox urban studies, justifies any interest in these new propositions.

Architecture as Logical Construction: Reason in Architecture.

Once he has exposed the connection between architecture and city, Rossi then proposes some principles of architecture. Architecture for Rossi is fundamentally "construction." The function of any theory of architecture is to examine the laws which allow "construction." These laws merely confirm that autonomy of architecture which comes out of its specific reality. For Rossi, then, the elaboration of these laws based on lived experience are the objective of every theory. As Rossi says, "in the true classicism of Alberti, norms are always modelled after life rather than on an *a priori* position."³⁵ When one studies the generation of these norms one realizes that, in theory, an architectonic order can be produced independently of a sequence of time.

The first principle of all architecture for Rossi would be the possibility of achieving a form from a set of elements; the relationship between the elements and the whole in which they are developed is the context of the architect's work.

Rossi explains how Boullée elaborated his project for a library (fig. 9): "at the beginning he sees the library as the physical site for the spiritual heritage of great men, of the culture of the past; it is they and their works that constitute the library. We must notice that these works, the books, remain throughout the development of the project as primary data, organized material for the project, the same as in the case of the national palace, the material of architec-

ture will be constituted by constitutional laws."³⁶

This emotional, definitive point of departure is not associated with a particular form of architecture; it is not used as a possible development of architecture. Assuming this premise and these components of reality (centralized light, accessibility, intelligibility, etc.) which justify such a typological adherence, architecture is constructed and becomes form, leaving for later development an examination of the technical and constructive problems deriving from the chosen type. And finally there is the obligation of making the work real and true.

Neo-classical architecture states for the first time the problem of content in architecture. In this context, architecture must derive reason for this meaning from its own field, from its own logic, from its autonomous position (fig. 8). It is not surprising then to find the classical orders, that are so close to a primary constructed reality, completely upset when forced into a new architecture in which the dimension, scale, and the traditional formal relationships, etc., have been forgotten. However, this content is always sustained by a logical development of architectural form, by a will to rational expression which is perhaps the most pronounced characteristic, a differentiated feature, of style. Furthermore, the will to reason is at times converted so that it becomes the exclusive content of neo-classic architecture. The interest of Rossi in neo-classicism is thus to be expected. This period witnessed the birth of a whole series of new building types in the service of a civil vision of history. Architecture experienced with neo-classicism, the architecture of the Enlightenment, the adventure of a new formal world. In this context, building assumes a character, "that is, the nature of the subject, its evocative power."³⁷ History, the collective memory of a certain past, is poured into the architectural object in order to make it intelligible, thus recovering its nature.

The fact that men demand from architecture this kind of satisfaction justifies an extremely rational attitude. In this way one does not oversimplify in the manner of that other type of rationalism which, as Rossi says, from a presumed scientific reason, is forgetting architecture's obligation to

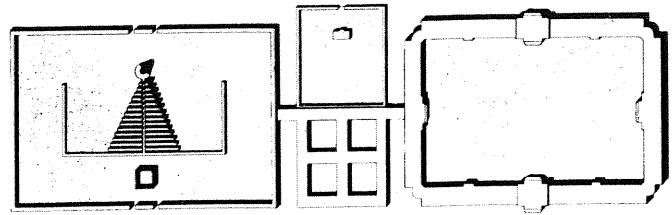
116 assume itself as the construction of a world of ideas.

The Enlightenment marks the first time in which architecture as an autonomous discipline was able to uncover principles which would allow itself to be seen as "construction." Thus Canaletto, Rossi says, can mount a collage with Palladio's architecture in Venice, Canaletto is telling us how the city can be thought of as a logical operation. This "objectification" of elements in building and of buildings in the city is characteristic of this period. It contains an objectification that allows for construction and for creation of an architecture using the same kind of mechanisms like such painters as Francesco de Giorgio Martini and Giorgio de Chirico. This is a way of forming, or constructing which, spread throughout the Veneto, and even today, gives the Veneto that strange feeling of urbanity that is doubtlessly one of its greatest charms.

This thinking about architecture abstracted from time, that occasionally gives Rossi's drawings the quality of a de Chirico (fig. 12), allows them to attain a reality, to become material, and to be built. The drawing of architecture, such as in Canaletto's paintings, already suggests construction: it is already architecture. This is the sense of Rossi's collages. Doric columns with concrete framework are architecture: they presuppose a relationship, a way of building from memory, with objects and with architectonic matter, without any mediation imposed by use.

A quick examination of one of Rossi's projects (fig. 13) would be enough to prove to what extent the statements of the Enlightenment and the principles of rational architecture, have been recovered.

The building is presented as a promenade, an axis around which are gathered different typological schemes. This axis will facilitate construction, the relationship between elements — the enclosed square, the tower on columns, the technological balustrade, the dome. Construction, in this case, is the possibility of manipulating these elements, of binding them, relating them, even admitting the formal diversity underlined by the use of materials — the columns in white steel, the facings in dark stone. Construction, the



10.

operation of architecture, charges disparate elements that cohabit in an unsuspected image with content, almost surrealistic in the midst of a park that, according to Rossi, allows "a building public *par excellence* not to lose contact with outside spaces, with the world to which it belongs."³⁸

The Project for the Modena Cemetery

Our intention here is not to examine the entire *oeuvre* of Rossi but to focus on the Modena cemetery (fig. 11). Having made an initial interpretation of his theoretical position, we can now attempt a reading of the cemetery so as to see how these principles are present in the work.

The Modena competition called for an extension of the existing traditional cemetery (fig. 10). It is necessary to point out the effort that Rossi makes in his accompanying text to describe the project in strictly architectural terms. For Rossi, describing architecture in some way guarantees its understanding: he has always insisted on a description of the city and of architecture.

The first concept introduced in his text for the competition is that of typology.³⁹ The cemetery is understood as a house; as the house of the dead. The first typological allusion points out that, in the earliest cultures, house and grave were the same thing, "death signalled a passing stage between two conditions with no well-defined limits . . . the cemetery as building shall be the house of the dead . . . today the identification of house with grave has only remained, as a distinctive feature, in the architectonic structure of the cemetery. The house of the dead, the grave, the cemetery is a deserted, abandoned house . . ." (fig. 15).⁴⁰

This idea of abandoned house, of spoil, is present throughout the entire work and deprives it of the condition of a house for the living, having lost those attributes without having itself become a ruin. Rossi sets himself throughout the project, the program of the desolate house.

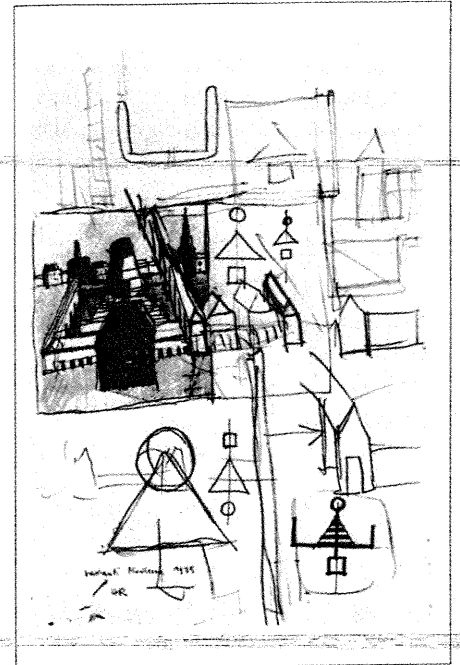
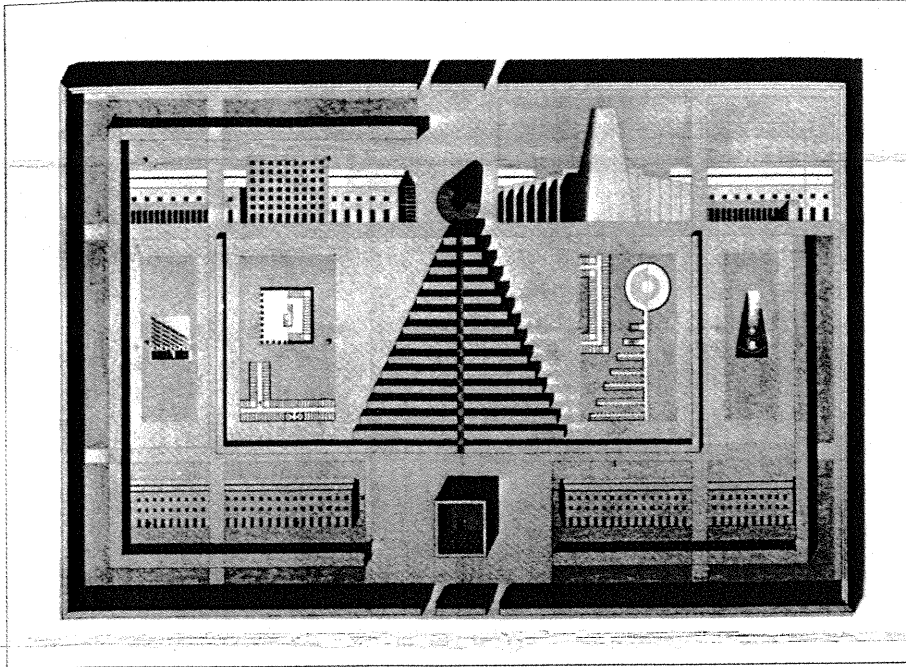
But to this idea of despoiled and abandoned house, is added another and different typological dimension: that which

10. Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Site plan showing the new cemetery, the existing Costa cemetery, the Jewish cemetery and the services area.

11. Projection drawing.

12. Sketch.

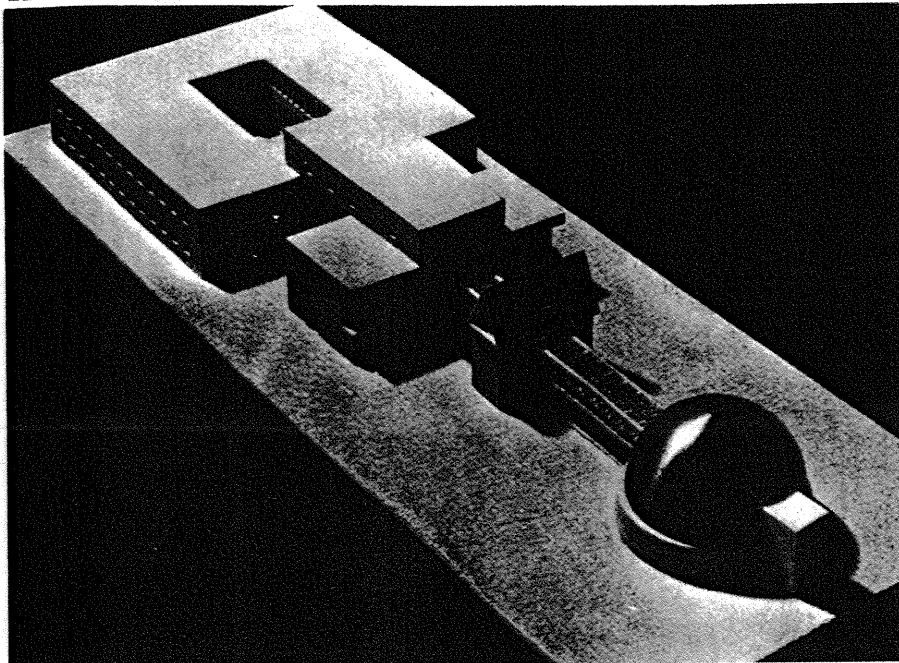
13. Scandicci City Hall, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1968. Model.



11

11.

12.



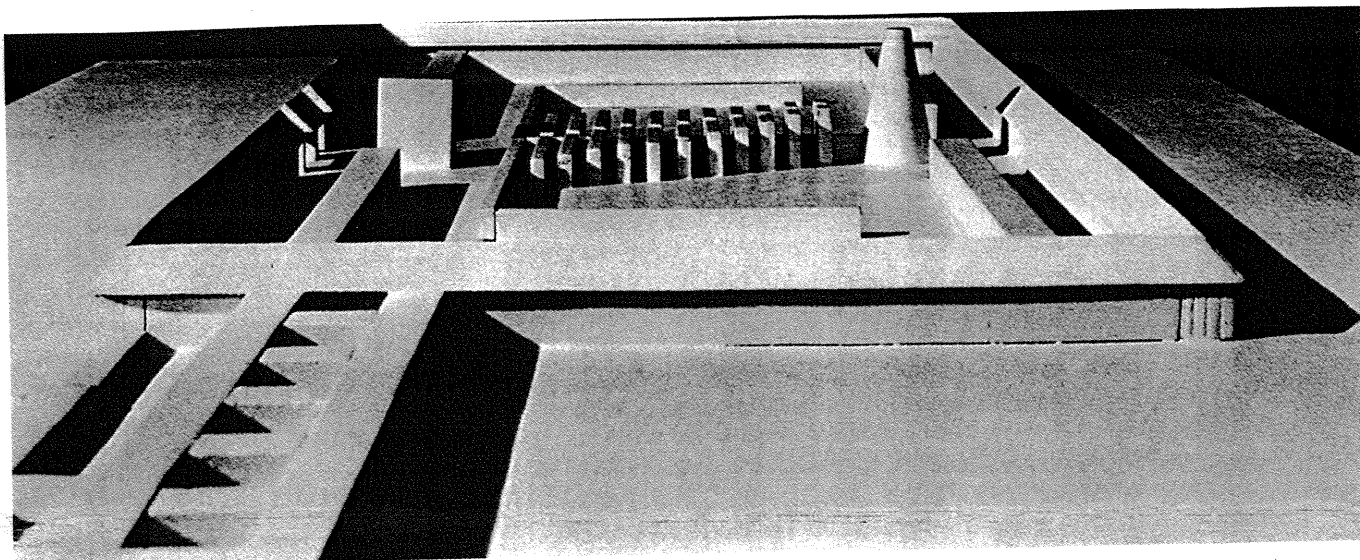
13.

14. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Model.*

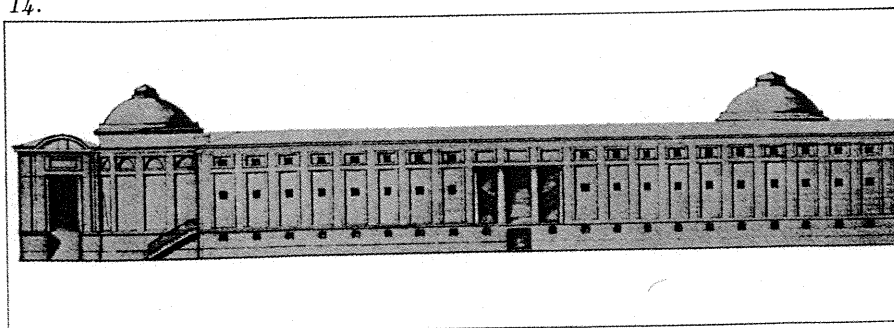
17. *The eighteenth-century Costa cemetery.*

15. *Aerial perspective.*

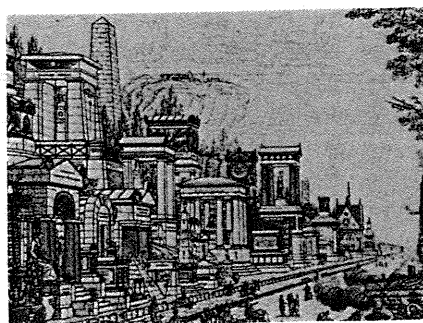
16. *Path of tombs, after Piranesi, c.1720.*



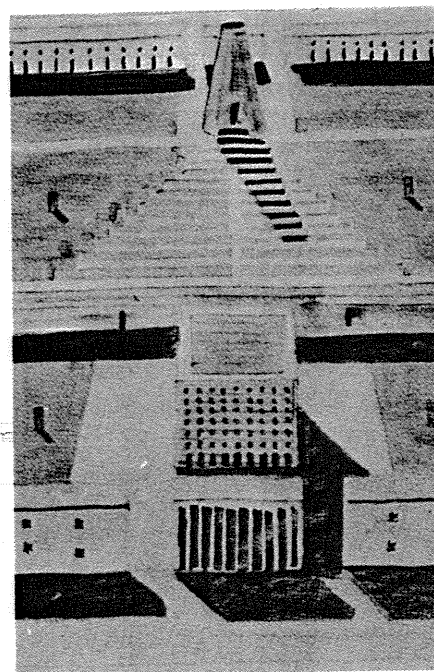
14.



17.



16.



15.

understands the cemetery "as a typological form of rectilinear arcaded walk."⁴¹ Rossi uses a reference for the project the building type of the classical cemetery.

It would be difficult to find another theme better suited to Rossi's preoccupations. The cemetery as an architectural type is consolidated during the beginning of the nineteenth century after the politicians took over the concerns of physical health and hygiene. The cemetery, the city of the dead, with walls that define it as a reliquary, with monumental doors full of archaeological resonance, with measurable order, with strict functional services that suggests the newly discovered hygiene, is a building type that was introduced in the late Enlightenment (fig. 16). The Costa cemetery (fig. 17) and the Modena cemetery are no exceptions. These well-known typological dimensions are accepted by Rossi here more radically than in any other of his projects.

We will not enter into the discussion suggested by the acceptance of the type as a given obligation of the project. In such a case, the acceptance of the type compromises the architect's choice in its deepest sense. To accept the traditional idea of the cemetery supposes accepting the gravity of the place and of the situation; supposes accepting the memory — forgetting those options that might understand the area as a park or a garden — as a pantheistic recovery made by nature with the internment of human spoil. This is in opposition to a Nordic or Scandinavian idea of the cemetery, which would solve the problem from a basis of a natural acceptance of death. Rossi underlines the social meaning of death — that history is made by our lives. Death is in this way incorporated in the graveyard; to an artificial social milieu whose meaning is found in ritual. Architecture helps man to live, to formulate those artificial situations, within which custom and usage, the past and memory, make sense. The recovery of a certain typology is thus intimately linked to the idea of memory, since it is from this role of the cemetery in society that one may understand that, "the architectural definition" constitutes "an architectural place where the form and rationality of buildings as interpreters of the city and, in this case, the meaning of the cemetery, may be an alternative to the senseless and disorganized growth of the modern city."⁴² Architectural form

must support such meaning: that is, its meaning in the collective memory through which one may then understand work, assimilate it and situate it in the world of known objects; this support establishes a relationship with the deep and so often forgotten world of our experience. 11

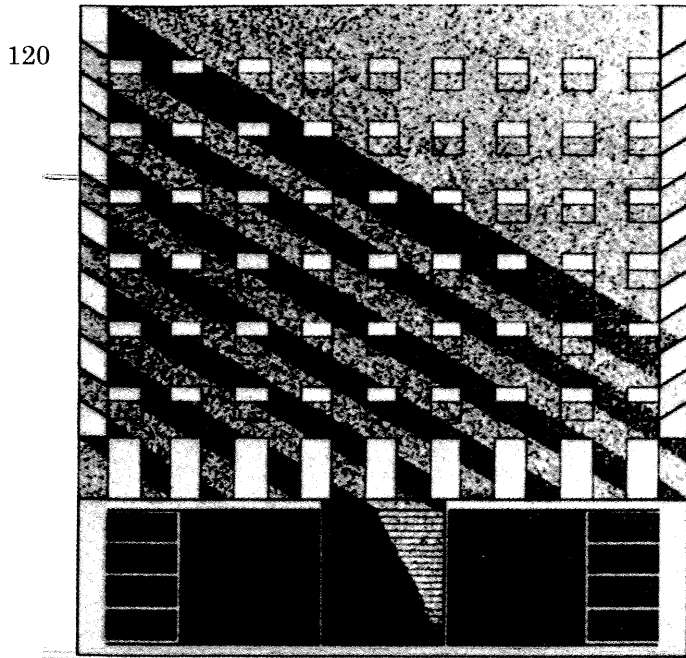
The cemetery, insofar as size, spaces, and the designation of those spaces, accepts the model of the nearby Costa Cemetery. There is, however, something quite different: the space is not covered by graves, instead these are situated catacomb-like, opposing each other: here the space is one with the monument, with the idea of grave; one standing for all, underlining the value of the empty, bare, despoiled enclosure (fig. 14). "The configuration of the cemetery as empty house is the space in the memory of the living."⁴³

The cemetery today is the place that positions the feelings of the living towards death, but this expression of the feeling of the living towards death is only achieved in this case through architecture, through the specific mode of knowledge that architecture has as an autonomous discipline. In general, our admiration for the great neo-classic cemeteries comes precisely from the fact that they can be seen as "the expression of a civic architecture."⁴⁴ The cemetery can continue to be understood as a known form near, immediate: it does not deny the character of building, but on the contrary, it is this character itself which is the departure for its architecture. We can accept that the cemetery responds, as an idea, to the feeling of abandonment of a house no longer useful, of emptiness in the most vulgar sense of the word, of a denial of what was once full and alive. How can the elements of architecture be used to achieve such an expressive level? "The cubic construction with regular windows has the structure of a house without floors and without roofs; the windows have no mullions, it is merely the house of the dead, it is an incomplete house, therefore, abandoned" (fig. 19).

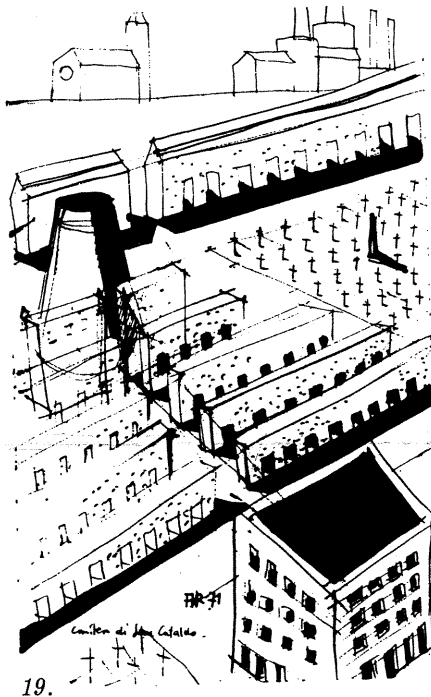
The expressive value is given to the unfinished, to the lacking, to the missing. The house is inhabited by people that no longer need protection from the cold; it is occupied by the living as they remember the dead. The architectural

18. Modena Cemetery, Modena,
Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971.
The house of the dead.

19. Sketch.



18.



elements — the windows for instance — are the same as in the houses for the living; they maintain their formal condition on the wall, but without those pieces and parts which would allow them to be useful and practical.

The entire project reinforces this idea of emptiness, beginning with the arcades. As we saw in the Scandicci City Hall, an axis is established which permits the location of elements of components for the elaboration of the architecture of the cemetery. But it is the emptiness, the arrival to nothing, that gives meaning to the approach, it is the goal of the journey. The sanctuary, a cubic form, allows one to be continually with "the blue of the sky" by way of the chamfered windows cut out of the wall. Empty house no longer in need of floors or roofs; but not a ruin. An eternally new house for the dead (fig. 18).

But after crossing the ossuary, the charnel house, we again meet the endless path, the path that will take us to the fundamental form, the key of the project, the common grave. The path is given meaning and underlined by the graves where the composition relates a greater length to a lesser height on a triangular floorplan, and produces, in the strange perspective feeling, an understood and assimilated labyrinth in which the creation of architectonic form is presented as a problem of distance and proportion. This is done in close proximity to the idea of storage, thus cruelly exposing such proximity if one thinks of the meaning of this storage.

The natural perspective is falsified as the height of the ossuary increases in depth, the corridor becomes an image *contra natura*; equivocal and atemporal. Someone walking without a notion of time, without perspective, reaches the gravepit, the terminus at the end of the path; the metaphor is obvious and effective.

Architecture is not presented as a volume, as a plastic body to which a certain use is ascribed. Rather the architecture is constructed with known primary and intelligible elements and, in this way, they give birth to the individualized, concrete architectural fact that is presented. The fact of building, as manifested in these elements, becomes a differ-

ent reality whose sense and meaning are accessible and understandable.

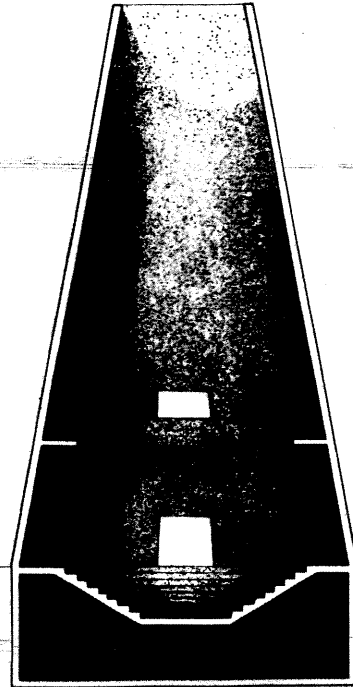
The journey that ends in the common grave, as we said before, is the agent of construction through which architecture is built; where architecture finds its meaning. The path takes us to the end, "the abandonment of the abandoned," says Rossi. "In the common grave are the remains of the abandoned dead . . . often people from the asylum, the hospital, the jail, from a desperate or forgotten existence. The city builds its most important monument for the oppressed." ⁴⁵

However, we must make a more careful analysis of these elements. The memory of Mycenaean tombs, of the Pantheon itself, of industrial ovens, etc., is obvious enough in the Rossi quotations. The truncated form allows us once more to remain alone with the "blue of the sky." The gravity of the space is accomplished through the primary experience of it.

Once more it is proportion, the relationship of measures, that supports the expressive value. The form, a truncated cone, overthrows the possible dome-like experience and becomes a less known, more abstract, yet understandable space (fig. 20). Everything is understood as forms that, through their excessiveness which individualizes them, become architecture, qualifying a place and creating a space in which "funeral and commemorative ceremonies of religious and civil character" can be performed.

The ordinary graves, which are under the ground, are divided into fields marked by numbered stones or *stelae* which are identified by an orthogonal network of paths crossing the rectangular area of the enclosure. Thus a well-known distributive mechanism, the orthogonal grid, is used to suggest the function of the space. This system of regulating lines divides the vast space defined by the enclosure; imposing a structure of form on meaning and use.

Thus "the aggregate of buildings is configured like a city . . . the cemetery becomes a public building with the necessary clarity and rationality of the pathways, with a suitable



20.

use of land . . . the reference to the cemetery is established in the architecture of the cemetery, of the house, of the city. . . ." ⁴⁶

This same clarity is demanded of the construction itself in its strictest sense. The construction is extremely simple, using only concrete blocks which facilitate the clear, unambiguous understanding of the constructive content of the project, without possible misinterpretation; the work and the explicitly written statements having an identical purpose.

Only the common grave, which is more complex in its construction, is thought of in reinforced concrete. This extremely subtle figure in reinforced concrete imposes the intellectualized character of the proposal as does a cover on a book — it is the ideogram of a cover. The clear paradigmatic image of cover crowns the cemetery walls.

Large stones would be used for paving the pathways; detail is abandoned for the sake of a greater clarity of the construction: the mental operation must be obvious, providing for a possible articulation that would give the architectural form a tactile quality necessary for its decorative enrichment.

The cemetery is thus close to the principles of a neo-classical architecture to which it conforms. The result is elementary, known, cruelly and painfully ingenuous, and it can be understood in this condition as a manifestation of first principles. Materials are elaborated within this criterion; they appear in their original state, without the hues and shades that would allow for the virtuosity of design. They are natural materials, neither valued more than another, since what matters is not so much the material but how it is employed: "the new materials are not the most modern ones but those which acquire their meaning from the way in which they are understood, that is to say, their modernity is not due to their novelty but to their *raison-d'être*." ⁴⁷

In reality we find ourselves confronted with an example of "how to build," that Rossi had already made explicit in

other projects, but in this case is presented with greater crudity, in each and every level in which the architect works in defining form.

Technique does not count, the essence of architecture is not found in technical matters. What is asserted is construction, the building activity, the specific business of the architect. It is the *work* which Rossi underlines and values. Rationality, in itself, is what matters, independent of any circumstance.

The result is an almost surrealistic image, phantasmagoric, "de Chirichian." Rational construction paradoxically gives place to a little-known image. It is as if the encounter between reality and rational order would establish a distance which would give to Rossi's work a surreal halo; in spite of Rossi telling us that "this project for a cemetery complies with the image of cemetery that each one of us has." ⁴⁸

For what is certain is that the image Rossi gives us today of a cemetery, although inspired by well-known typologies, is produced as a mental image and only from this viewpoint can it have a sense otherwise lost in the retina hardened by the commonplace of everyday experience.

But it is also necessary to indicate some objections, not so much with the theory but rather with the results of Rossi's projects and proposals. The reference to surrealism, to certain Renaissance and metaphysical perspectives, puts us on the track of one of Rossi's characteristics that is both greatly disputed and consciously proposed: this is his estrangement from the real, understood as the everyday occurrence. Certainly one could speak of the recovery of an authentic dimension of reality as happened in the architecture of the Enlightenment. But Rossi's imposition of a deliberate distance between the image of reality, trivialized and banalized through use, and the perspective that proposes what an architecture of the city might be, also points out a certain attitude which says something about the possible future of the architecture in our present society. One more step and we find ourselves faced with that extreme critical position of Manfredo Tafuri, which interprets the

autonomy which Rossi claims for architecture as merely allowing the architect to carry out his work through inoperative parameters, as a pure game. Paradoxically, this game, according to Tafuri, only has meaning in this society, which in so many ways is unalterable. This architecture may be seen as capable of assuming its architectural condition, its specific reality, because it is only interested in the problems that concern it, without necessarily reaching a level of objectivity, however desirable, because in so doing it would intrude into other aspects of social life. From the architect's personal or individual condition this autonomous position would have value since it does not trust the social transcendence of its work.

Therefore, Rossi's architecture could be understood as an evasive one, deliberately forgetting the framework of the real even at levels as evident and compromised as the technological one, which, as is well-known, constitutes for some the ultimate *raison-d'être* of architecture. It is thus possible to interpret his elemental construction, his aggressive and polemical design which underlines the formal aspects of the primary spaces as something which borders on the expressive, ingenuous and evident world of children.

Furthermore it is easy to understand how its monumentalism has been misinterpreted by critics who adhere to the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement, as an incomprehensible involution, as one more episode of waste which, in this particular case, is seen as too sophisticated.

Such a vision of Rossi's work would contradict his argument which pretends to incorporate a dimension of the collective, and the weight of social order, as a precondition and obliged reference to the process of individualization which is part of the production of an urban fact. It should be the obligation of this architecture of the city to be a meeting point of the individual and collective interests which could guarantee its social relevance.

Rossi clamors for an architecture with a precisely engaged civic value of architecture and affirms it as the only way to achieve the collective. Nothing is further from Rossi, then, than architecture as escape, as nostalgic sentiment.

We are now in an area in which every side thinks they are defending the same positions. The anti-autonomists vindicate the vicarious role of architecture in the consolidation of the environment and refer control to the exercise of ideological power: architecture is simply a game and as such to understand it as an autonomous, closed discipline, can be on occasion better, insofar as it is less equivocal.

On the other hand, for the autonomists, it is precisely through architecture that society can express its civic and public manifestation. The genuine value of the autonomy of architecture is that it allows for an expression of society in which architecture is an indispensable instrument for the production of the framework necessary to civil life.

On what does one base a value judgment when speaking of architecture? Rossi's is to underline and make visible the value of architecture itself at a time in which it is fashionable to speak of the extinction or death of architecture. This position makes clear that one of the most important tasks of man on earth is the creation of the city.

In this light, Rossi is as much anti-Archigram as he is anti-Venturi. Archigram presupposes an attempt at solving the problems of architecture through technology in such a way so as to produce an architecture almost automatically, incorporating both formally and visually every technological innovation. Architecture as "discipline," as a way of thinking, as spatial order, disappears. The answer to functional needs, which are thought to be the only ones that interest mankind, will come from technology and not from architecture. Here we are in the antipodes of Rossi's thought. Here man exercises control over space through architecture and thereby the problems of the world we live in.

We can see the criticism in Venturi's understanding of architectural reality. Here reality is capable of including everything, assuming everything, admitting that communication in the physical world is based more in the support of non-architectural mechanisms than in those that see architecture as a discipline through which the physical world is both transcended and intruded upon. Architecture must

be integrated into this process of communication forgetting its specific condition, its own norms; what is interesting is the control of communication, not the intrinsic study of the architectural world, from its internal coherence, the logic of its production; to recover, in a word, the sense that, in today's society, have the forms that specialists look upon as banal. These proposals of Venturi's are radically opposed to those of Rossi's, as we have seen throughout these notes.

Where then is Rossi's charm, his ability to convene, as demonstrated by the enthusiasm that surrounds him? In our view it is the emphasis on the explanation of architecture through the city, a concept that includes its opposite. This is equivalent to saying that architecture cannot be proposed as an individual task which in a competitive society systematically stimulates novelty; in fact, in Rossi's work, there is a deliberate relinquishing of novelty, and a desire not to demand an excessive effort from memory in leaning on a formal repertory whose interpretation is clear and unique. The insistence on permanence, on the capacity memory has for recognizing the past, for living history, presupposes a determined rejection of architecture as a purely personal task. However, from this approach to the city it would make sense to speak of the individual task of the architect, insofar as in this dimension one could work at the level of the concrete, of personal intervention. For the architect does not act in a vacuum in radical solitude, but, on the contrary, knowing what is collective in the city he, as an individual, could penetrate the ground where architecture belongs, and make architecture.

This is Rossi's proposal, one that has been developed throughout all his projects, from the Segrate fountain to Gallarate and San Rocco. It can be pointed out that one can find in these projects the same attitude as in the Modena cemetery. This anticipates the objection that comes from thinking that a theme such as this — the cemetery — presents the best opportunity for the development of a methodology, of a proposal such as we have described. It would be difficult to find a work of architecture in which the continuity form-content needs greater expressive demand; one need only read Rossi's statement to find out to what extent architecture is asked to express feelings.

But then what are the linguistic means utilized? Only those Rossi judges to be supportive of architecture; they are therefore alien to the formal fractures imposed by vanguard movements. Rossi's architecture is based on what he understands as basic principles — relationships, order, measurements, the mirror of the constructive, formal remains still identifiable, utilization of perspective as symbolic form, such as Panofsky explains it — rather than as description of space, etc.

The figurative supports of Rossi betray a certain elementarism: architecture as contained form seeks support in primary, elemental situations. Taste, or better yet the need the architects of the Enlightenment felt for expressing themselves through elementary forms, reappears as an invariable in Rossi's projects. There is something that might bind him to the Corbusian definition of architecture: short light sketches the reality of the object. The use Rossi makes of thrown light in his drawings is not a simple problem of representation.

The reaffirmation of reality, through these elementary contrasts that define both the presence and the encounter of architectural objects, appears in every one of his projects: the value of a slope, of a corridor behind the stairs, of a cylinder and a prism which had been assigned functions alien to their form, etc., are all episodes that are telling us what Rossi thinks is construction. It is always a question of architecture that results from a certain mental operation, from construction therefore or, better yet, from a reconstruction of sensations that as such is a mental act, reconstruction which, on the other hand, takes place from a conscious manipulation of the elements of architecture.

There is a certain Heideggerian vision that interprets construction as the occupation of the land, though I do not believe Rossi ever mentions Heidegger. This is what gives Rossi's architecture that ontological and metaphysical condition within which building, achieving architecture, presupposes a reflection alien to any possible spontaneity.

The entire formal world of Rossi and what it means can be understood as an attempt at survival through evasion; in

other words, that at a time when architecture as a discipline is about to disappear, in which its death has been decreed so often, the tragic defense Rossi makes could seem a desperate attempt at nostalgic evasion. In fact, one could ask many questions after examining Rossi's works: can a defense, such as he has attempted, be accomplished outside technology (Archigram) or alien to the satisfaction that is demanded by the eye of the most vulgar of mortals (Venturi)? Is not Rossi's archaism witness to the oblivion, in the most vulgar sense of that word, of the real? Monumentality, in Rossian terms, is indeed useful for the understanding of the old city, but can the modern city be adjusted to the same models?

The answer to all these questions, which we have formulated several times throughout these notes, forces us to accept not only the autonomy of architecture but also to consider an atemporality, which would lead us to admit that the old city and the new are, at least in their principles, the same thing. And if that is the case then, the attitude of man towards urban facts and to architecture would also be the same. We would find ourselves in a fully platonic vision of events or perhaps, put in more current terms, it would be a structuralist view capable of clarifying the city, and therefore its architecture, through the concepts of typology and morphology. And this brings us to consider the double role played by Rossi as both creator and a critic.

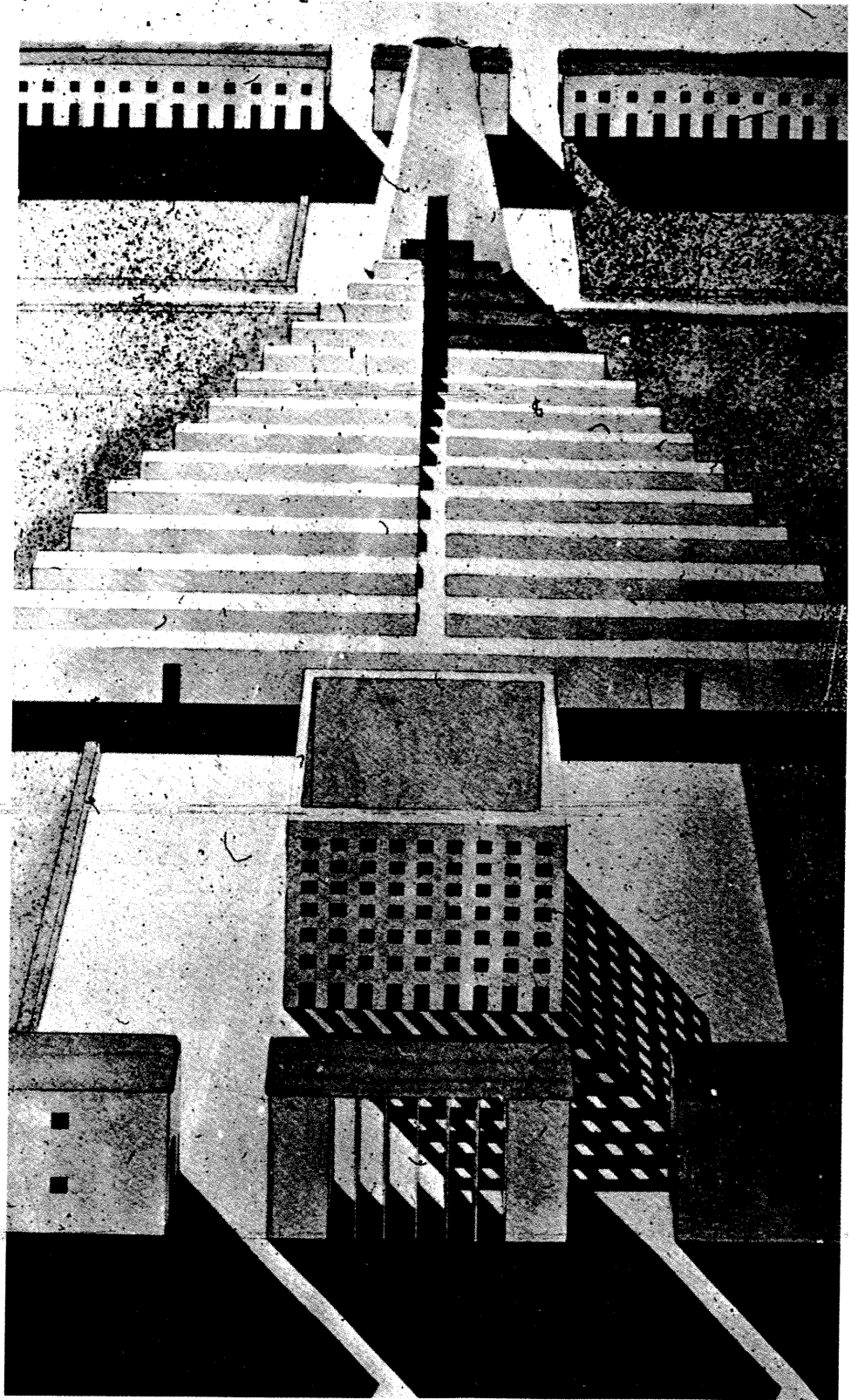
As the critic, one cannot doubt the clarifying value of Rossi's work. A critique of modern urbanism has been made possible through the knowledge of the old city. This has shown the terrible voids in modern urban theory and therefore the role the old city plays as an antidote. This is his most important contribution to the development of current urban thought.

But is there a one to one correspondence between the projects and this theory of an architecture of the city? That is to say, does a Rossian view demand a figurative world as exemplified in an extreme sense in the Modena cemetery? In my understanding it does not. Although I have tried to explain how his theory was realized in a concrete project, I believe that following Rossi's enunciated principles in no

way compels the formal choices he has made.⁴⁹

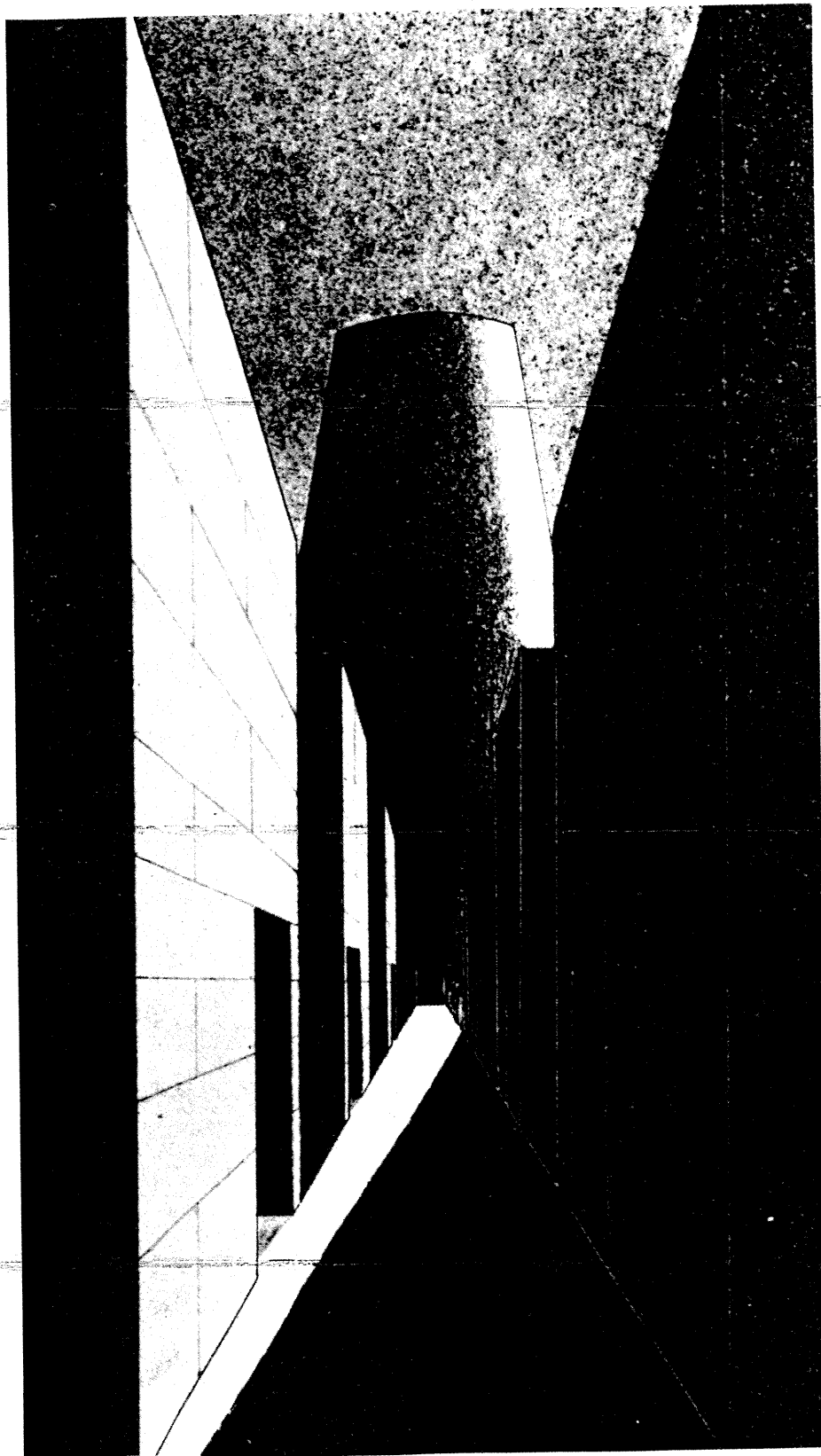
This could be an extremely dangerous statement because it could be misunderstood as the possible rejection of Rossi's doctrine, as the erroneous interpretation of his architecture, as such it would be totally unjustified.

21. *The representation of the cemetery insists on its meaning from the city, since it is the city, so distant in many ways, that supports it. The cemetery is thus: "the architectural place where the form and the rationality of built forms, interpreters of the city and of the meaning of the cemetery, are an alternative to the foolish and disorganized growth of the modern city." The weight of the grave, of the cubic die of the sanctuary, are felt in the drawing, at the same time that the elementary geometry of the courtyards is underlined by walls and entrances; their elemental nature is given more strength by their monumental value.*

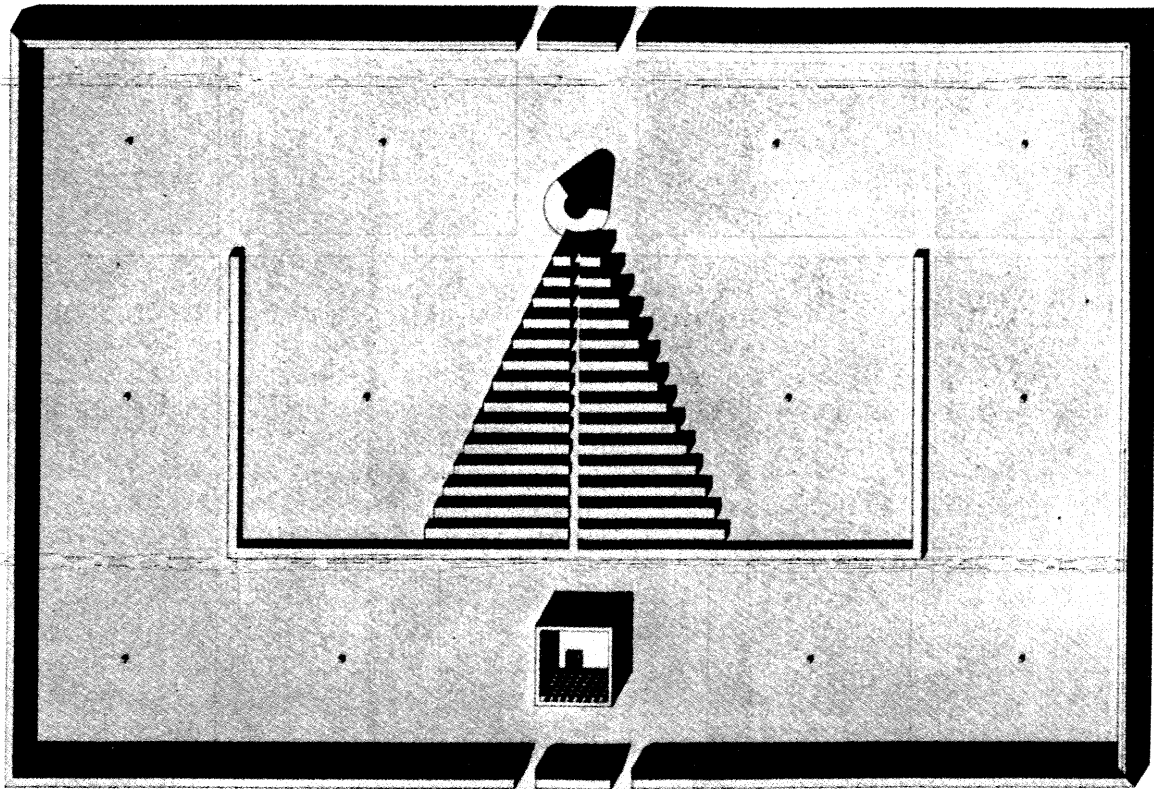


22. *The volume of the common grave imposes itself as an unappealable verdict: "lives are like rivers that end at the sea, which is death." The solitude of the street, with its allusion to the city of the living, is made more obvious by the presence of the common grave; the remembered city, through a use of its morphology, loses its real condition and scale to turn into the city of the dead. Thus, through the monument of the common grave that "to these oppressed, the city builds its highest monument," there is a stage set with the perspective of civic criterion as backdrop to the solitary, though full of memory of the street.*

But this perspective will no longer respond to the laws of geometry that allowed its construction, its drawing; on the contrary, the changes in height of the common grave, taking place as one progresses towards the gravepit, destroy the expected perspective vision, from the moment in which an optical game, so architectural, makes one lose the notion of measured space, of controlled, deep space. The image constructed and thought out through a well-known idea of space is a different one and, when the perspective is upset, is converted into a vision of the timeless city.



23. Rossi's was, among all projects, the one that most respected the traditional type and idea we all have of a cemetery. This can be seen in the floor plan of the first presentation board: the same idea of enclosure, the same size areas, the identical pathways, access roads, etc. But, as this floor plan shows, there is a certain use of the individual elements, whose public meaning has already been explained, which endows that space with a new meaning. Thus, Rossi's proposal renounces the dual axis of the Costa Cemetery and manifests an interest in a continuous reading of the elements through the value acquired by the axis. From the filter of the entrances in which the scale of the new construction is transformed, one reaches, on axis, the monumental sanctuary, with a blind wall perpendicular to the axis. After paying homage to the sanctuary of Cerberus, we anxiously recover the axis that leads the way to the common grave. The expression; the capacity for evocation and recollection has been totally entrusted to architecture. For it is through architecture and strict mechanisms of its discipline that the elements lose their abstract condition and become reality, acting upon us.



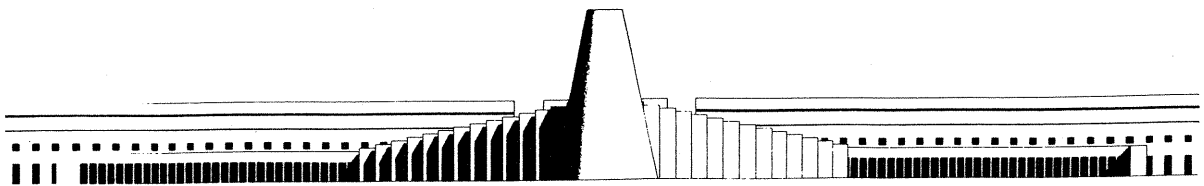
24. *The value of the floor plan as generator of space that Rossi mentions when dealing with the greater of spaces, the city, is clear in these drawings.*

A certain idea of element, whether it is a matter of defining areas or of constructing significant pieces, enables Rossi to establish a subtle relationship between the ground level and the underground level, between the plane of the living and the plane of the dead; thus silence, the emptiness left in the world of the living, an emptiness that covers the space presenting us with elementary monumental pieces, makes tragic contact with the gravity of interment, with the weight of a custom. But while the living need the presence of the monument as a bound point of references that enables them to understand the space, the city of the dead can do without it, trusting only a new type of element – the value of plane as such.

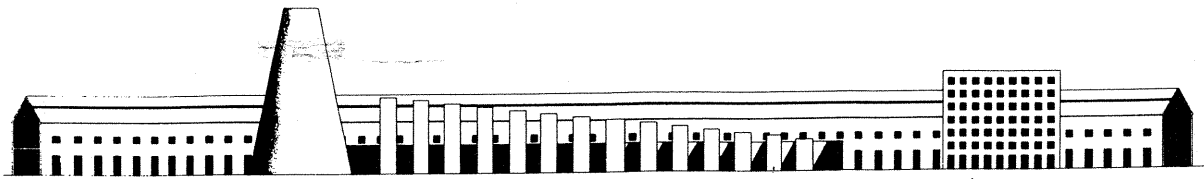
In any case, it is interesting to underline the level of expression reached through architecture,

through the strict exercise of a discipline, since these are exclusively architectural elements (order, geometry, scale, etc.), which enable the creation of a sensible space, even if it is something as serious as establishing the meaning of death and the dead for the living.

25. *The elementary character of architecture that Rossi speaks of is manifest in these elevations, as elementarist definition of architectural form (this could lead us even to link Rossi's work to the projects of Le Corbusier of Towards a New Architecture), and as use of the series of elements as material for the project. Mechanisms that justify the permanence of the discipline, to put it in Russian terms, are again openly utilized: order through measure; value of size and proportion; equivocal scales; the weight of the axis on the definition of form; the consideration of superficial values through a system of voids and hollows; the presence of the singular; the generation of space through the movement it demands, etc.*

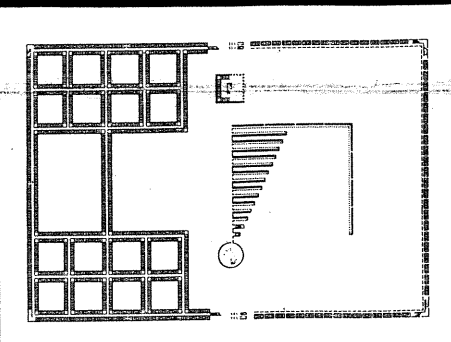


PROSPETTO NORD



PROSPETTO OVEST

24.



25.

1. These notes, written in 1973 before the Triennale of 1974, do not deal with the complex notions which provoked that exhibition; with the grouping under the banner of the "Tendenza" — a heterogeneous, yet consciously selected, group of architects from different countries. Thus these notes are limited to a discussion of Rossi's principles made explicit in his book *L'Architettura della Città*, and in this light, to see how Rossi designed the Modena Cemetery without considering the propositions inherent in the Triennale even though Rossi was undoubtedly the inspiration for these ideas.
2. Aldo Rossi, "Rapporti tra la morfologia urbana e la tipologia edilizia," *CLUVA* (Venice: Editrice CLUVA, 1966).
3. See Aldo Rossi's article in *La Città di Padova* (Rome: Officina, 1970).
4. Introduction by Aldo Rossi to Etienne Louis Boullée, *Architettura: Saggio sull'arte* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1967).
5. Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1966), p. 11.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 31. Quotation from Quatremère de Quincy, *Dictionnaire Historique de L'Architecture* (Paris, 1932).
11. Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città*, p. 32.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
16. *Ibid.* Quotation from C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris, 1955), p. 121.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
28. Maurice Halbwachs, *La population et les tracés de voies à Paris depuis un siècle* (Paris, 1928).
29. Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città*, p. 183.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, p. 188
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
35. Aldo Rossi, review of François Cali, *L'Ordre Grec* (Paris, 1958), in *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 228, 1959.
36. Introduction by Aldo Rossi to Boullée, *Architettura*.
37. *Ibid.*
38. "Architettura di Aldo Rossi 1967-1970," *Controspazio*, 10, October 1970. pp. 29-42.
39. Aldo Rossi, "L'azzurro del cielo," *Controspazio*, 10, October 1972, pp. 4-9.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
49. Nonetheless, those who have followed his principles seem to have been led inevitably towards an architecture in which no other formal elements fit except for those proposed by Rossi. Thus the strict Rossians echo the formal parameters of the master to such an extent that his principles, so inaccessible and so abstract, seem to have been paradoxically and contradictorily converted into a mannered style. To maintain that the city is built from architecture and its principles is not to bring about one type of city made of fixed and identical elements: in other words, an understanding of Rossi's proposals does not automatically imply the reproduction of Rossi's architecture.

Figure Credits

- 1, 14. Photographs by Sergio Fornasetti. Courtesy Aldo Rossi.
2. Reprinted from *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 199, December 1953-January 1954.
- 3, 5-8. Reprinted from Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1966).
4. Photograph by IDZ Berlin/Christian Ahlers.
9. Reprinted from Jean-Marie Proust de Montclos, *Etienne Louis Boullée* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1967).
- 10-12, 15, 18-25. Courtesy Aldo Rossi.
13. Reprinted from *Controspazio*, 10, October 1970.
16. Reprinted from Adolf Hueppli, *Kunst an Kult der Grab Statten* (Switzerland: Walter-Verlag Ag Olten, 1968).
17. Reprinted from *Controspazio*, 10, October 1972.