



LAYERS OF A SEMANTIC FAÇADE

Bruce D. Nagel

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Theory and Criticism

Jorge Silvetti

Harvard University

Time has come to be concerned with the facades or vertical surfaces in architecture. It seems that the contemporary attitudes regarding the facade are too under stated. What has been realized is that modern architecture and its aspirations of rational and moral positions are, in the end, not the only answers to the problems of architecture. As these utopian ideas begin to be challenged, we look for other definitions to solve the image of architecture and the problems of urban spaces. It would seem clear that the implications of facade are about *fronts, backs, walls, and the definition of edges* versus modern architectural objects of multiple sides, corners, and non-enclosures. The Renaissance has been chosen as a reference because of its connection with a similar attitudes about *fronts, backs, and the definition of edges*. The notion of facades, which can be associated with this Roman typology of solid city and that many critics are using as an example of a valid approach to architecture and cities,¹ must be addressed.

I will present the following ideas within this argument:

- The plan as a generator of architecture
- The symbolism of facades
- Techniques of treatment of facade and surfaces
- Touch the issue of the implications of façade to urban space.

I would hope that from this, one may begin to question if the notion of facade is negative or in fact, does the notion of facade address issues that the modern architect has chosen to avoid.

- *"The plan is the generator."*²
- *"The plan proceeds from within to without; the exterior is the result of the interior."*³

- *"The concept 'facade' is already passing from architecture. No place remains in buildings for that which is not to some function...."*⁴

As one approaches the Villa at Garches by Le Corbusier (plate 1), the modern movement stands ahead confronting you. The textbooks and manifestos begin to appear, not only the ideas I have quoted above, but certainly *plan libre*, *cantilevers*, *ribbon windows*, and *roof gardens* come to mind. All of these elements can be found at Garches, but the image of the facade seems to make the reading of the interior plan difficult.⁵ One begins to wonder if within this thin layer of external skin, the internal truth has been dissolved and only glimpses of the plan organization comes through (plate 2). The facade has been dealt with in an *original, obtrusive, and alarming manner*. Obtrusive and alarming because facade treatments do not form part of the common theories of the modern movement. The repeated contradictions of the plan and facade, as exemplified in Garches and throughout the modern movement, seems to give us a clue that there may be other factors operating to explain the differences of the two.

The plan as the generator is presented to us in Le Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture*, but it might have come just as easily from any of the modern movement fathers such as Gropius or Mies. But because of the fact that Le Corbusier so clearly presents the notion and the fact that Garches does not seem to grow clearly from within to without, a contradiction can be established. The plan as generator seems to represent the utopian ideals of an architecture existing in a *Ville Radieuse* or the *Plan Voisin* (plate 3) environment, for it implies that the building is free and capable of taking any configuration without concern of its

neighbors or existing patterns. As the Plan Voisin becomes a proto-type for bureaucratic housing in any American city (plate 4), and the validity of the utopian

Plate 1 – Villa at Garches (façade) – Le Corbusier

Plate 2 – Villa at Garches (plan) – Le Corbusier

Plate 3 – Plan Voisin for Paris – Le Corbusier

Plate 4 – New York City Housing Project

Plate 5 – Pruitt-Igoe Housing, St. Louis – Minoru Yamasaki

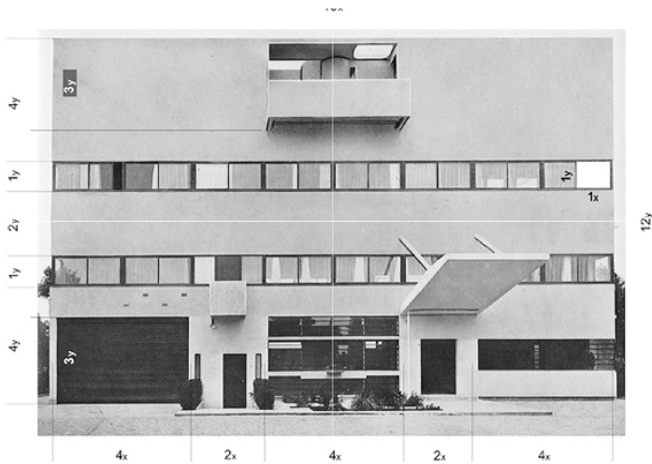


Plate 1

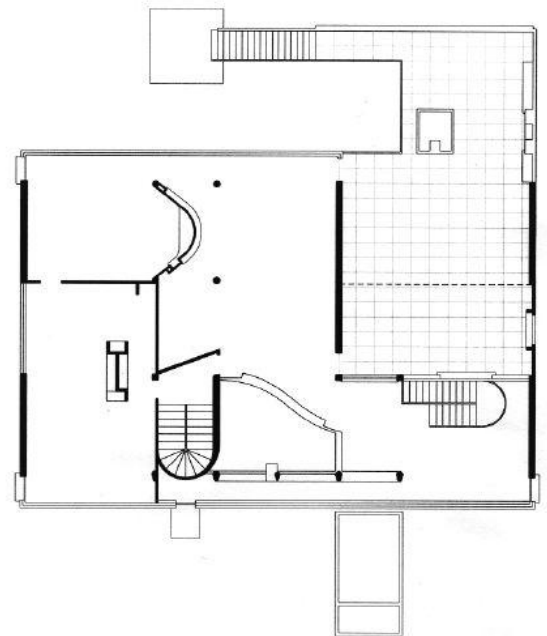


Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4

planning ideals begin to fail, Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis (plate 5) illustrates this so dramatically⁶ so too may the validity of the plan as generator be examined.



Plate 5

Utopian ideals are not the only issue, but there is the moral .purity that is aspired by the movement. Honest expression of the plan in the facade is expected - *form follows function*.⁷

The modern architect is not interested in facades (plates 6 & 7) but allows his elevations to express the inner workings of the buildings. Or he prefers that it should appear that these decisions were forced upon him by structural, technical, or functional considerations which were almost beyond his control. Perhaps the

continuity of the interior and the exterior is best achieved with the introduction of *'flowing space'*. In expressing the notion of flowing space, Robert Venturi states "It produced an architecture of related horizontal and vertical planes."⁸ But it is the glass wall that falls between the interruptions of planes that allow for relationship and the reading of the interior to flow to the exterior as in the Barcelona Pavilion (plate 8) or Philip Johnson's House (plate 9). The glass wall soon becomes the most honest expression for the interior, for it is simply the non-material quality of glass that enables one to avoid the issue of stating enclosure. Throughout architecture, the theory of unity of the interior and the exterior has been present. Alberti touches the problem when he states "the architect should work as one that would have his work valued not by the apparent perspective, but by the real compartments founded upon reason."⁹ But it is Milizia who states clearly "the exterior must have the same order as the interior (plates 10 & 11), because the latter must be announced by the former: and an *exterior story* cannot be of a different character from that within."¹⁰ He goes on to give a comprehensive theory of the interior exterior unity: "The facade is to an edifice what the physiognomy is to man; and it is most unfortunate when, in either case,

Plate 6 – 860 Lakeshore Drive, Chicago – Mies van der Rohe

Plate 7 – PanAm Building, New York, - Gropius

Plate 8 – Barcelona Pavilion – Mies van der Rohe

Plate 9 – Johnson House, Connecticut – Philip Johnson

Plate 10 – St. Andrea, Mantua, Italy - Alberti

Plate 11 – Medici Chapel, Florence, Italy - Michelangelo



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11

the exterior is enigmatical or contradicts the quality of the interior.”¹¹ It is not my intention to challenge the unity of the interior and exterior but to state that it is only one factor in forming the exterior.

I will return again to a quotation in *Vers Une Architecture* by Le Corbusier: “Mass and surface are the elements by which architecture manifests itself.”¹² Le Corbusier may state the plan is the generator, but he admits it is the vertical surface that allows one to read architecture (plates 12 & 13). Michael Graves characterizes the plan “as a conceptual tool, a two dimensional diagram or notational device (plate 14). It is only by the *synthesis* of the conceptual plan with the perceptual elements of architecture (vertical surfaces) (plate 15) that the value of the three-dimensional experience of a building is understood.”¹³

Milizia pointed out the exterior can tell a story, and one can determine characteristic from the features or elements that make the building face. These type of notions seem to address themselves to public or *symbolic reading* of architecture. Because of the simple orientation of the exterior to the external world, there seems to be a requirement that the particular building facade must

not only adjust itself to the *plan specific* (plate 16) but to a *public generality* (plate 17). Even though the public does not interact with the use of a building, they will still interact with the building as a visual and aesthetic experience. It may be possible to say that the plan represents the *real use and the private user*, and the elevation represents the *symbolic use and the public user*.¹⁴

The idea of facade can now be brought into the realm of symbol (plates 18 & 19) or meaning and communication. Meaning is normally relayed to use through language according to a set of rules.¹⁵ It is from the agreed upon rules that language can be

Plate 12 – Assembly Building, Chandigarh, India – Le Corbusier

Plate 13 – Assembly Building, Chandigarh, India – Le Corbusier

Plate 14 – Alexander House, Princeton, New Jersey (plan) – Michael Graves

Plate 15 – Alexander House, Princeton, New Jersey – Michael Graves

Plate 16 – Villa Savoye, Poissy, France – Le Corbusier

Plate 17 – Villa Savoye, Poissy, France – Le Corbusier

Plate 18 – Human Figure on Facade – F. DiGiorgio

Plate 19 – Human Figure on Doorway



Plate 12



Plate 13

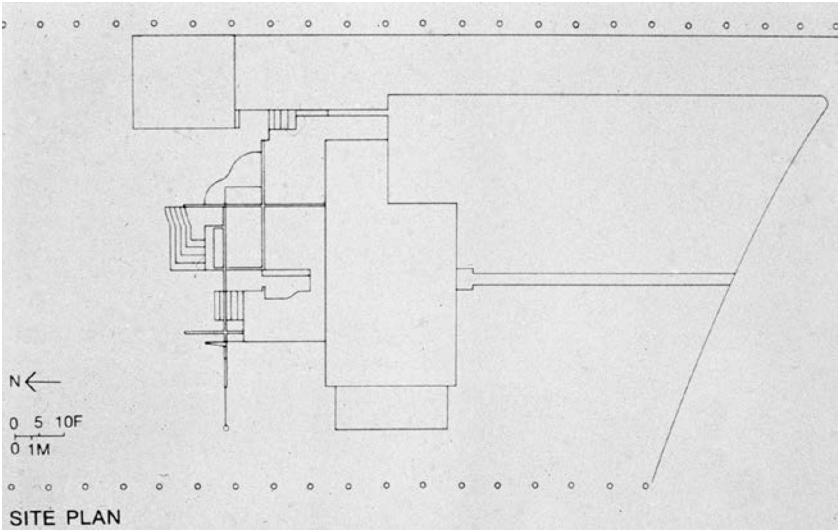


Plate 14

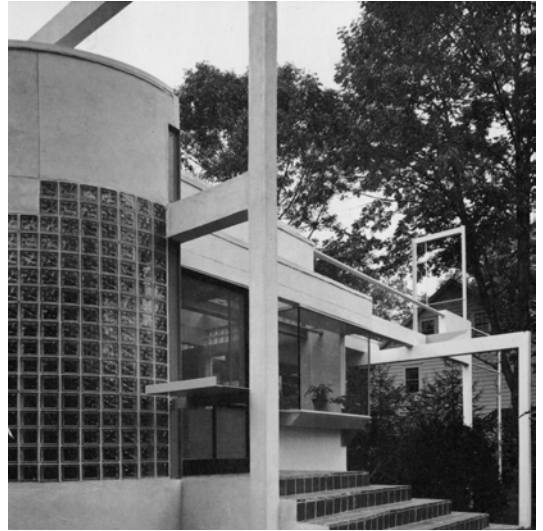


Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17

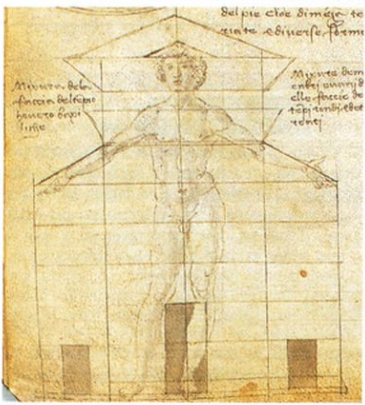


Plate 18

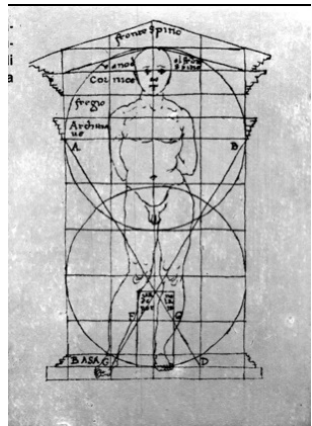


Plate 19

communicated and understanding or the meaning is relayed. Meaning may be divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Irwin Panofsky divides primary meaning into factual and expressional and gives an example of a man on the street who lifts his hat.¹⁶ Factual meaning is seeing the form or shape as man and the change of form as lifting of one's hat. The expressional meaning is approached from a psychological framework by reading into the factual meaning feelings toward the viewer. The secondary category of meaning is conditioned by culture; therefore, the lifting of one's hat is read as 'salute and polite greeting'. Architecture can have these types of readings. A window (plates 20 & 21) in a wall, in the primary meaning, can simply be seen as a hole in the wall and a function of allowing light and air through the wall. But if the window occurs round in shape and in the end wall of a mass (plate 22), the secondary meaning takes over and the window is now a rose window with all the implications of religion and a higher spirit. Umberto Eco in '*Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture*' develops further the idea of reading levels of meaning.

When I look at the windows on the façade of a building, their denoted function may not be upper most in my mind; my attention may be turned to a window-meaning that is based on the function but in which the function has receded to the extent that I may forget it, for the moment, concentrating on relationships through which the windows become elements of an architectural rhythm (plate 23). Thus, an architect might present one with false windows (it could be a door) (plate 24), whose denoted function would be illusory, and these windows could still function as windows in the architectural context in which they occur and be enjoyed as windows.

Moreover, windows - in their form, their number, their disposition on a facade, may, besides denoting a function, refer to a certain conception of inhabitation and use; they may connote an overall ideology that has informed

the architect's operation. Round arches and pointed arches, and ogee arches all function in the load-bearing sense and denote this function, but they connote diverse ways of conceiving the function; they begin to assume the symbolic function.¹⁷

Plate 20 – Claghorne House, Princeton, New Jersey – Michael Graves

Plate 21 – Alexander House, Princeton, New Jersey – Michael Graves

Plate 22 – First Baptist Church, Boston, Mass. – Rose window

Plate 23 – Cad’Oro Palace, Venice, Italy – Giovanni Bon

Plate 24 – Santissima Annunziata, Florence, Italy – Antonio da Sangallo



Plate 20



Plate 21

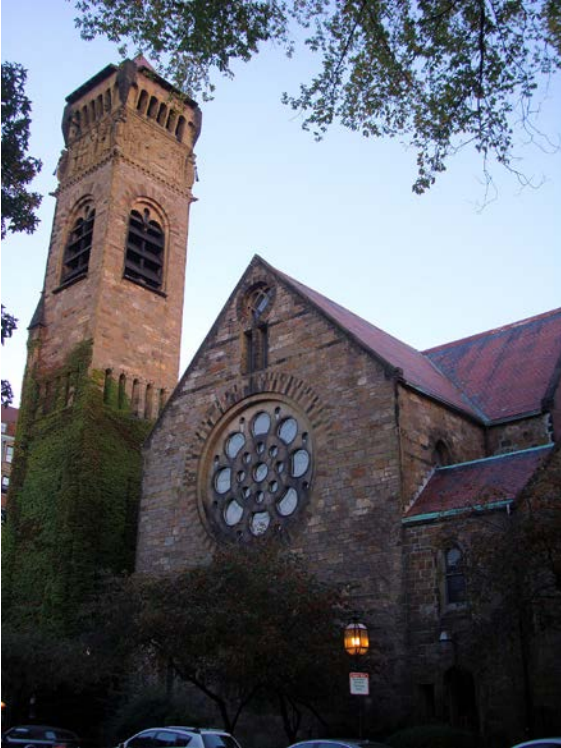


Plate 22



Plate 23



Plate 24

A more basic analysis of meaning will show that signification (signifier and signified) fixes meaning.¹⁸ Architecture is indeed a system of signification and is suggested by a functional representation between the products and use of architecture. But what permits our use of architecture is beyond the possible

functions of the objects. It is the meanings connected with these objects which dispose us to particular functional uses. A stair (signifier) will evoke the idea of movement up (signified) (plate 25). But a stair as simply an object without cultural preconditioning may in fact mean a series of other responses such as a grandstand for seating (plate 26). It is the cultural training that enables us to read that the dimension is too small for a grandstand (plate 27) and that we are expected to walk up by raising one foot above the other to the next step until you reach the top.

Signs or object codes (plates 28 & 29), whether consciously or un-consciously, are the formal tools that architects use to identify meaning. These icons are a part of a warehouse or '*memory bank*'¹⁹ of forms that one either copies, transforms, or reacts to. In Alan Colquhoun's article '*Typology and Design Method* ', he develops a clear argument that we are *not* free of the forms of the past; therefore, a typological approach to design may enable us to see forms and renew our awareness of the meanings which are carried by these forms.²⁰ The formal development and ultimately the reading of the vertical surface in architecture carries with it a typology of forms and their meanings, a door, a window, and the wall itself, all have a tradition and therefore a precedent that is unavoidable.

Plate 25 – Benacerraf House, Princeton, New Jersey (stair) – Michael Graves

Plate 26 – Sala di Constantino, Window Embrasure Decoration – Giulio Romano

Plate 27 – Sala di Constantino, Vatican – Giulio Romano

Plate 28 – Column with Human Figure

Plate 29 – Column Details

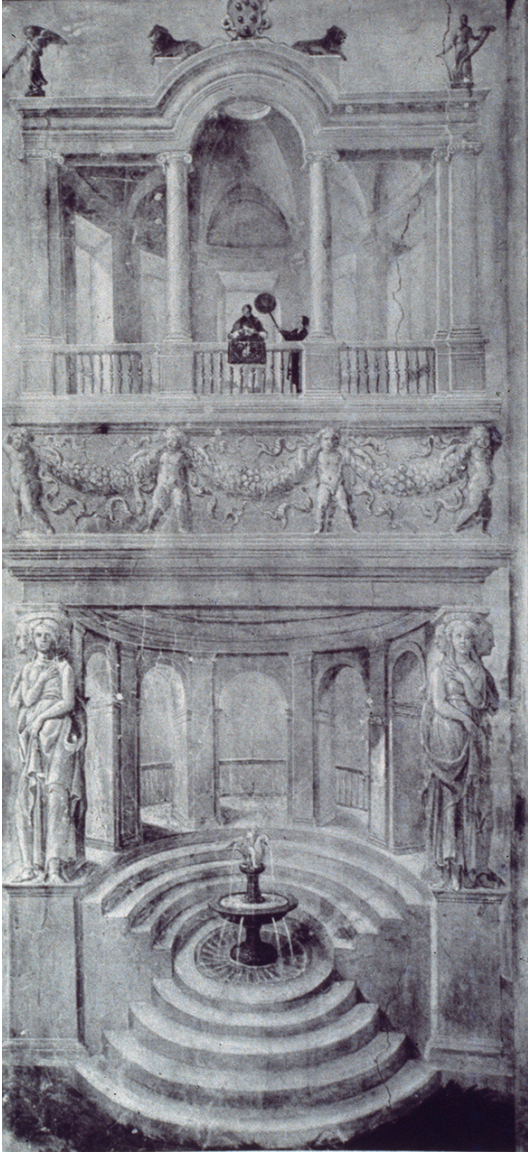


Plate 26



Plate 25



Plate 27

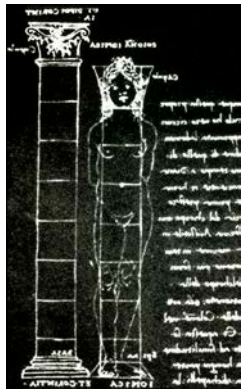


Plate 28

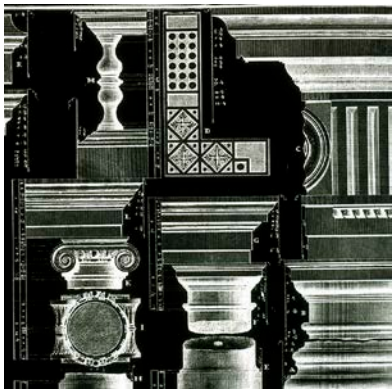


Plate 29

Mario Gandelsonas in his article ' *On Reading Architecture* ' states:

"To consider an object in its direct communicational aspect results in its definition only in terms of its primary meaning, that is, in terms of its function.

But, the complete communicational circuit also includes the sender, receiver, and code. The primary meaning in architectural messages is "buildings" representing their use or their physical structure. Secondary meanings "represent" and emphasize the areas related to sender, receiver, and code.

The concern of modern architecture has been mainly within the area of primary meaning, the functional area. And important to the functionalists' concern within this area was the replacement of one set of rules with another set of rules."²¹

The notion of *semantics*, found in the title of this paper, is a reaction to the concentration on primary meaning or the functional concern of modern architecture and the replacement of a set of rules (plate 30) with a new set of rules (plate 31). Semantics, by definition, is the relationship of signs to the objects to which the signs are applied or the relationship of meanings of a sign or set of signs.²² I feel it is this secondary meaning of relationships of signs or the expression of rules as rules that will enable a dialogue of architecture to take place.

The concept of *layers*, implied in the title of this paper represents a technique from the Renaissance and the invention of perspective (plates 32 & 33). The invention of perspective, a more exact knowledge of space, and the discovery of antiquity, a more exact knowledge of antique art, are the two events which have been held to mark the beginning of the Renaissance.²³ The fundamental principle

Plate 30 – Villa Savoye, Poissy, France – Le Corbusier

Plate 31 – Vanna Venturi House, Chestnut Hill, Penn. – Robert Venturi

Plate 32 – The Flagellation of Christ – P. Della Francesca

Plate 33 – Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time - Bronzino



Plate 30



Plate 31



Plate 32



Plate 33

of perspective is seen to achieve a harmony of parts or the idea of proportion and is the process by which we arrive at proportion. The formulation of a common law for nature and for artistic form lies in perspective which may in general terms be defined as the method or mental procedure for determination of value. The conception of design, as the common root of all the arts, that is, as the designation of the absolute value of form, is therefore very closely related to the conception of perspective; perspective is actually the method of design in so far as it is absolute representation.

For painters, perspective is the law and architecture enables painters to deduce their law of vision (plates 34 & 35). It may be said that since architecture is free of any necessity to *'imitate'* reality, the formal discipline of architecture must precede and condition the painters contact with reality. But in the Renaissance, art and architecture are too closely fused to avoid the influence of one on the other. With the invention of perspective, not only the surface of canvas is capable of taking on this excitement of simulating real space, but the surface of architecture, which in fact may be a reality of dimension, begins to share an excitement of creating a reality that: is not always feasible (plate 36). By layering the surface (plate 37) and sliding or peeling away these layers (plate 38), objects can begin to be read as one in front of the other. With the introduction of gridding the surface, order or the harmony of perspective is achieved and a non-existing space can be portrayed.

The facade of the Pazzi Chapel, by Brunelleschi (plate 39), as a development of this spatial theme is a representation of a flat subtle dialect. By identifying linear and chromatic values, the linear element is cleared of the material quality of the outline just as the chromatic element is cleared of the material quality of the

Plate 34 – Ideal City – Piero della Francesca

Plate 35 – ???????

Plate 36 – Basilica of San Lorenzo, Florence (Façade model) - Michelangelo

Plate 37 – Palazzo del Te, Mantua, Italy – Giulio Romano

Plate 38 – Palazzo Rucellai, Florence, Italy – Leon Battista Alberti

Plate 39 – Pazzi Capel, Florence, Italy - Brunelleschi



Plate 34



Plate 35



Plate 36



Plate 37



Plate 38



Plate 39

surface. The pattern of the frieze and the grooved pilasters are almost vibrating with light and shade and may be distinguished from the surface. In an article by Giulio Carlo Argan on *'The Architecture of Brunelleschi'*, he clearly states about the Pazzi Chapel facade:

For Brunelleschi the plane is the place on which there occurs the projection or definition of depth, not as an effect, but as a pure value or geometric form. Therefore, the place is a pure mental abstraction, the precondition for the representation of space. Alberti will translate this intuition of Brunelleschi's into a formula: the surface is still matter, and as it were the outer skin of things, although it is the extreme limit of matter, its suture with space; instead the plane is a geometric entity, the "intersection" of the visual pyramid. In fact, the plane in Brunelleschi's architecture is an "intersection" and not a surface; it is a place on to which the various spatial distances are projected, and on which the infinite dimensions of space are reduced to the three dimensions of perspective space.²⁴

From Brunelleschi, we can now move on to Michelangelo and the Sistine ceiling (plate 40), the Laurentian Library (plate 41), or Vasari and the Uffizi (plate 42), for they are all examples of the grid that has been stretched and elongated, heightening the experience of depth into perspective. All these spaces share, with Brunelleschi, the projection of various spatial distances, but the infinite dimension of space has been extruded to its limit.

We can now go on to other examples in which it is not the elastic quality of stretching the grid but of layering the grid and simulation of one in front of the other (plates 43 & 44). John Coolidge, in his abridged *'Studies on Vignola'*, states:

"The key to his aesthetic system is the fact that he considered a building, not as a three -dimensional whole, but as a series of planes, the ground plane, the facade planes, and the plane representing the elevation of the interior. This is the more remarkable because his major buildings are so placed that they could be viewed as free-standing blocks. Yet, none of these buildings exist as a

sculptural solid. The impression that one carries away from all of them is of a facade.

But these planes were not created independently of one another. The design of each was intricately bound up with the designs of all the others, and the features which had direct bearing on one plane were indirectly expressed on all the others."²⁵

Plate 40 – Sistine Chapel Ceiling - Michelangelo

Plate 41 – Laurentian Library, Florence, Italy - Michelangelo

Plate 42 – Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy – Giorgio Vasari

Plate 43 – Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy - Vignola

Plate 44 – Villa Farnese (Villa Caprarola), Lazio, Italy - Vignola



Plate 40



Plate 41



Plate 42



Plate 43



Plate 44

Perspective and the desire to portray real space on the canvas has helped to lead architecture to a more animated attitude of surface and its manipulation to portray something beyond reality or the creation of the reality of one's imagination.

The *layers* that are alluded to can also be found in art of the more recent past as well as in the Renaissance. Approximately 1907 in Paris, there developed a new attitude of painting - Cubism (plates 45 & 46). The evolution of painting, and of

cubism in particular, shared with science the common characteristics of drawing upon late nineteenth-century achievements, but in so doing, intensifying and transforming them.

The intentions of cubism were basically realistic (plate 47). An indication of this realism would be the fact that a true cubist painting contains a subject-matter of objects that might be seen together in one place (plate 48). The issue is therefore

Plate 45 – The Young Ladies of Avignon – Pablo Picasso

Plate 46 – The Mandolin Player – Pablo Picasso

Plate 47 – Still Life Le Jour – Georges Braque

Plate 48 – Nature morte à la palette – Georges Braque



Plate 45



Plate 46



Plate 47



Plate 48

the precise nature of the cubist reality in comparison to the treatment of reality in the Renaissance.²⁶

One may look at cubism as portraying the reality of conception and the truth of a visual experience, other than portraying the reality of the vision (plate 49). To accomplish these concepts, the cubist artist developed a group of formal principles: frontality, flatness of the picture plane, definition of the light sources, oblique and rectilinear grids, the non-illusionistic inter-relation of pictorial planes or transparency, and collage.

It is the notion of *transparency* that gives to the canvas what Siegfried Gideon might call '*space -time*'²⁷ or viewing objects from several points (plates 50 & 51). The idea of transparency is not that of a material quality as in glass or translucent panels that allows light or objects to be read clearly and unbroken, but as Gyorgy Kepes in *Language of Vision* might define:

If one sees two or more figures overlap ping on another, and each of them claims for itself the common overlapped part, then one is confronted with a contradiction of spatial dimensions (plate 52). To resolve this contradiction one must assume the presence of a new optical quality (plate 53). The figure s are endowed with *transparency*: that is they are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other.²⁸

Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky in their article '*Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal*', point out that there are two ways of perceiving transparency, one as an inherent quality of material (glass), the other the inherent quality of organization which can be distinguished as *literal and phenomenal transparency*.²⁹

Plate 49 – Le Portugais 1911 – Georges Braque

Plate 50 – Still Life 1920 – Le Corbusier

Plate 51 – Still Life with Numerous Objects 1923 – Le Corbusier

Plate 52 – Gestalt Diagram – Bruce Nagel

Plate 53 – Gestalt Diagram – Bruce Nagel



Plate 49



Plate 50



Plate 51

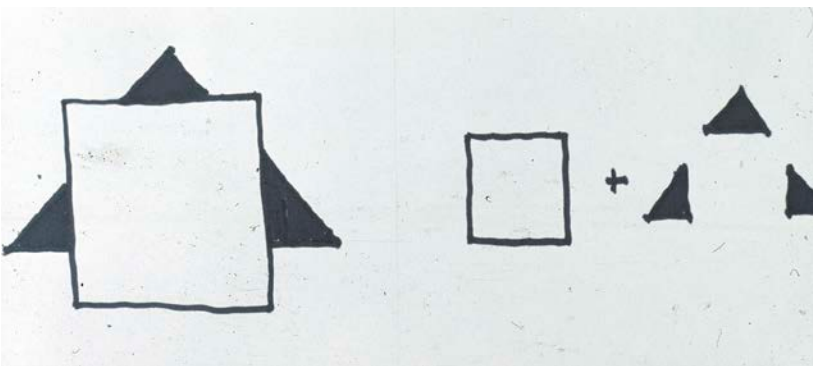


Plate 52

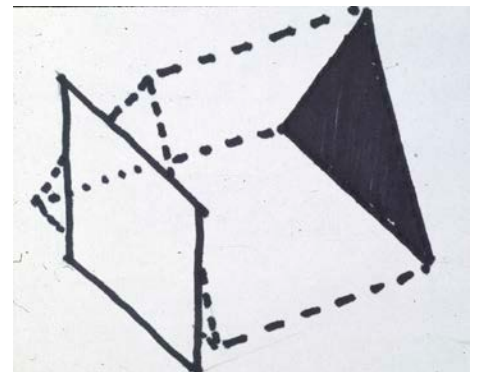


Plate 53

I would like at this point to take one of a series of comparisons by Rowe and Slutzky that may help illustrate the difference of the two transparencies:

In *La Sarraz*, by Moholy-Nagy (plate 54), five circles connected by an S-shaped band, two sets of trapezoidal planes of translucent color, a number of near horizontal and vertical bars, a liberal splattering of light and dark flecks, and a number of slightly convergent dashes are all imposed upon a black background. In *Three Faces*, by Fernand Leger (plate 55), three major areas displaying organic forms abstracting artifacts, and purely geometric shapes are tied together by horizontal banding and common contour. In contrast to Moholy, Leger aligns his pictorial objects at right angles to each other and the edges of his picture plane: he provides these objects with a flat, opaque

coloring and the sets up a figure-ground reading through the compressed disposition of these highly contrasted surfaces.

For in spite of its modernity of motif, Moholy's picture still shows the conventional pre-cubist foreground, middle ground, and background, and in spite of a rather casual interweaving of surface and the elements introduced to destroy the logic of this deep space , Moholy's picture can be submitted to only one reading. On the other hand, Leger makes completely plain the multi functioned behavior of clearly defined form. Through flat planes, through an absence of volume suggesting its presence, through the implication rather than the fact of a grid, through an interrupted checkerboard pattern stimulated by color, proximity, and discrete superimposition, Leger leads the eye to experience an inexhaustible series of larger and smaller organizations within the whole. Leger's concern is with the structure of form, Moholy's with materials and light.³⁰

Plate 54 – La Sarraz – Laszio Moholy-Nagy

Plate 55 – Three Faces – Fernand Leger



Plate 54

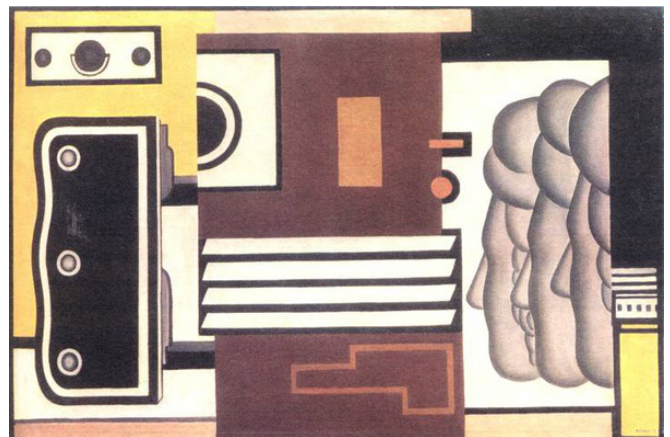


Plate 55

By returning to Garches, by Le Corbusier, one can illustrate what is meant by phenomenal transparency as compared with an example of literal transparency in architecture. Again I'll use a comparison by Rowe and Slutzky:

Le Corbusier's villa at Garches (plate 56), almost contemporary with the Bauhaus (plate 57), might fairly be juxtaposed with it. Superficially, the garden facade at the house and the elevations of the workshop wing at the Bauhaus are not dissimilar. Both employ cantilevered floor slabs, and both display a recessed ground floor. Neither admits an interruption of the horizontal movement of the glazing, and both make a point of carrying the glazing around the corner. But now similarities cease. From here on, one might say that Le Corbusier is primarily occupied with the planar qualities of the glass and Gropius with its translucent attributes. Le Corbusier, by the introduction of a wall surface almost equal in height to his glazing divisions,

Plate 56 – Villa at Garches (rear façade) – Le Corbusier

Plate 57 – Bauhaus School – Walter Gropius



Plate 56



Plate 57

stiffens his glass plane and provides it with an over-all surface tension, while Gropius permits his translucent surface the appearance of hanging rather loosely from a fascia which protrudes somewhat in the fashion of a curtain box. At Garches we can enjoy the sensation that possibly the framing of the windows passes behind the wall surface; at the Bauhaus, since we are never for a moment unaware that the slab is pressing up behind the window, we are not enabled to indulge in such speculations.

At Garches the recessed surface of the ground floor is redefined on the roof by the two freestanding walls which terminate the terrace; and the same statement of depth is taken up in the side elevations by the glazed doors which act as conclusions to the fenestration. In these ways Le Corbusier proposes the idea that immediately behind his glazing there lies a narrow slot of space traveling parallel to it. Recognizing the physical plane of glass and concrete and this imaginary plane that lies behind it, we become aware that here a transparency is effected not through the agency of a window but rather through our being made conscious of primary concepts which 'interpenetrate without optical destruction of each other.'³¹

By placing art in the background and concentrating more on architecture the application of phenomenal transparency becomes more difficult. As in the Renaissance and perspective, cubist painting simulates three-dimensional quality and architecture takes from art an excitement of surface to create a reality. But the Renaissance facade was the *simulation of reality*, the modern facade becomes the *reality of the simulation* or a cubist abstraction.

The success of Garches to allow one to read these layers of transparent quality is created because it is approached *frontally* much the way you approach a painting. The problems of reading architecture in the modern movement are

when the aspirations of the modern artist are allowed to be realized (plate 58 & 59); that is, viewing an object or objects from many points. This attitude is fine when on the canvas for it is *unescapable* that you must return to the issue of frontality. But in architecture, *when the frontal reference is eliminated*, the commentary of multiple points of reference to the single point of reference makes for a confusion in reading, orientation, and approach (plate 60). The individual implications of this attitude has certainly made for urban patterns of sets of objects (plate 61) without the collective quality of the '*solid block*' as in any number of Italian cities (plate 62).

Plate 58 – Schroeder House, Utrecht, Netherlands – Gerrit Rietveld

Plate 59 – Project – Farkas Molnar (Bauhaus)

Plate 60 – Robin Hood Gardens Housing, London – Alison & Peter Smithson

Plate 61 – Project – Gerrit Rietveld

Plate 62 – Figure Ground, Rome



Plate 58

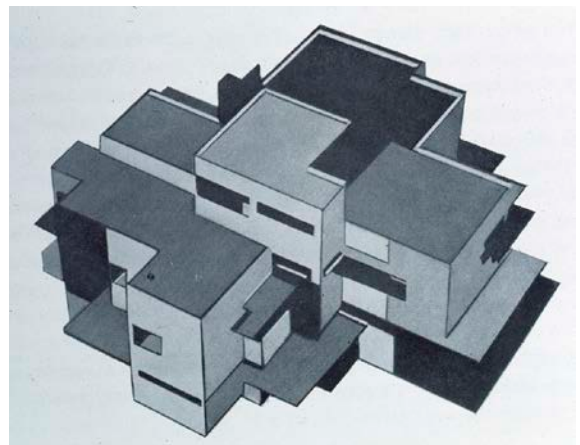


Plate 59

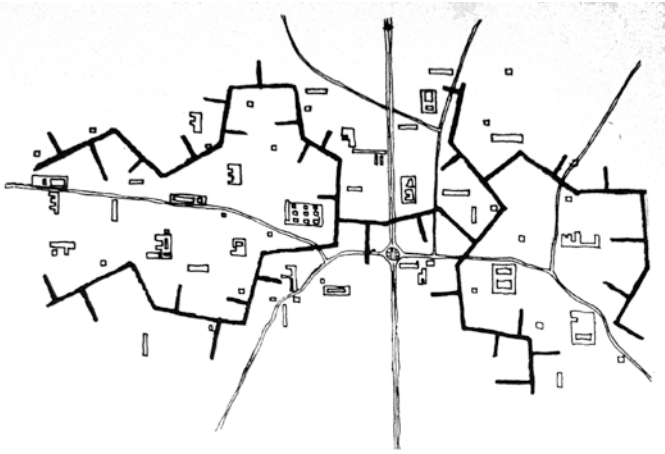


Plate 60

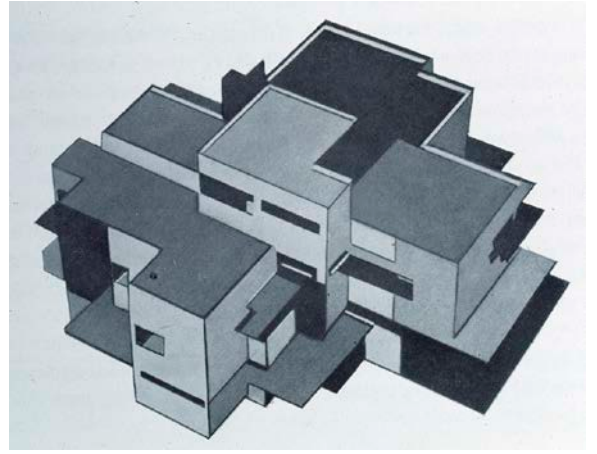


Plate 61

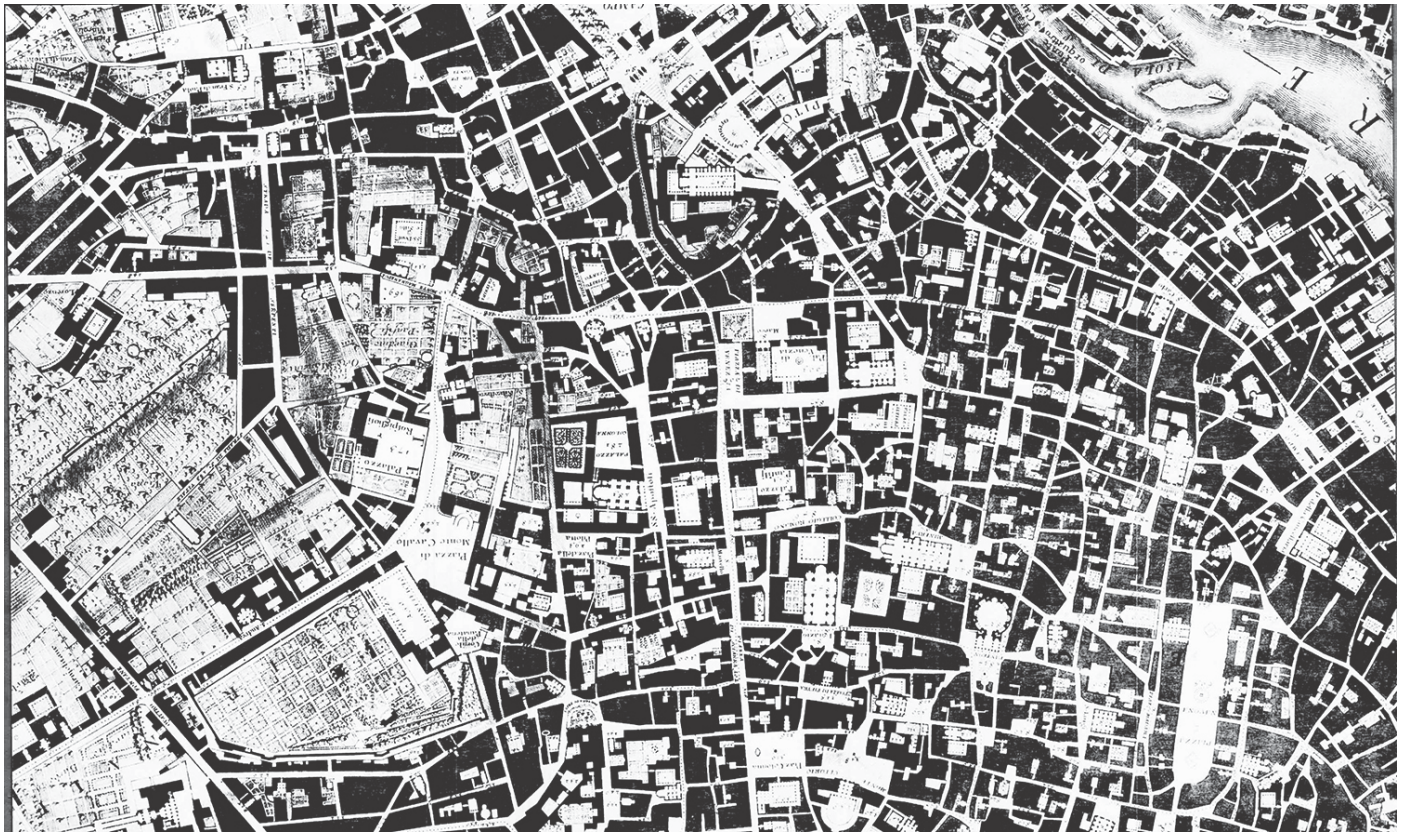


Plate 62

It has been my intention to present an argument that the facade of architecture has a deeper meaning than the modern movement may attribute.

- First, there is the issue of plan as generator and, in fact, the possibility of it being only a *partial generator* the image or facade (plate 63).
- Second, there is the issue of meaning or *symbolism of seeing the facade* and the references it makes (plate 64).
- Third, there are the *techniques* that may allow for a multiple of interpretations or readings and the formal techniques that exist in architecture that can excite and animate the surface (plate 65).

In general, I feel that it is time to reevaluate the state of architectural ideologies and, in specific, to re-establish and recognize the values of vertical surfaces or facades in architecture.

Plate 63 – Masion Dom-Ino – Le Corbusier

Plate 64 – Fountain House, California – Rodolfo Machado & Jorge Silvetti

Plate 65 – Villa at Garches – Le Corbusier

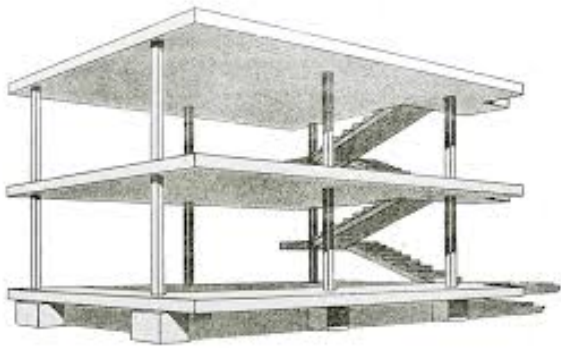


Plate 63

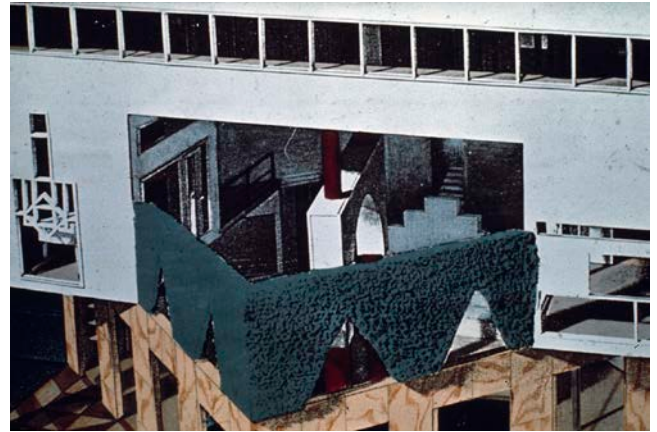


Plate 64

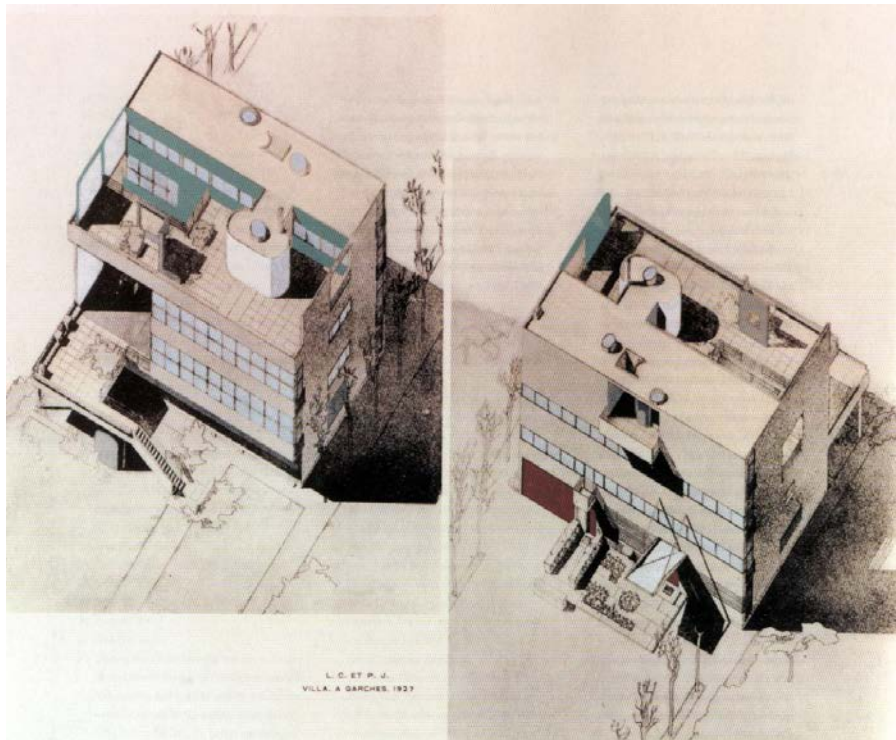


Plate 65

Footnotes

1. For a clear development of this refer to:
 - a. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, "Collage City", *Architectural Review*, August 1975, pp.66-91;
 - b. Tom Schumacher, "Contextualism: Urban Ideals + Deformations", *Casabella* 1971, no.359-360;
 - c. Stuart Cohen, "Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it All", *Oppositions* 2 , pp.1- 40;
 - d. Gilbert Herbert, "Facadism in Italian Architecture, Part II: Planning Implications of Facadism", *RIBA Journal*, December 1960, pp 75-80.
2. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, The Architectural Press, _London, 1927, p .45.
3. *Ibid*, p.164.
4. Moholy-Nagy, *source unknown*.
5. For an analysis of the Villa at Garches and comparison with the Villa Malcontenta by Palladio see Colin Rowe's article "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" in *Architectural Review*, v.101-103, 1947.
6. This argument is developed in the Rowe and Koetter article "Collage City", *op. cit.* ,pp. 68 -7 3.
7. This statement is attributed to Louis Sullivan but it may be best developed by Horatio Greenough in his book *Form and Function: Remarks on Art, Design and Architecture* University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1947.
8. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966, p. 71. You should note that Venturi in the chapter 'The Inside and the Outside' states: "The inside is different from the outside."
9. L. B. Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. by James Leoni, Tiranti, London, 1955, II. 1.
10. F. Milizia, *The Lives of Celebrated Architects, Ancient and Modern*, trans. by Mrs. E. Cresy, London, 1826, v.1, p.xlvii.
11. *Ibid*. p. lxiii.
12. Le Corbusier, *op . cit .* , p . 28.
13. Michael Graves, "The Swedish Connection", *Journal of Architectural Education*, September 1975, p. 12-13.
14. Refer to Mario Gandelsonas' article "On Reading Architecture, Michael Graves: Semantic Dimension", Graves, who works in the area of secondary meaning in architecture, structures pairs of notions in an opposition, to demonstrate the principle that opposed are a vehicle of giving meaning.
15. Ferdinand De Saussure, the father of modern linguistics, was the first to treat language as a system of signs and suggested that rites, customs, .and other social phenomena could be treated *as* systems of signs. For an abridged explanation of this, see the article by De Saussure , "Course in General Linguistics" , in *Structuralists from Marx to Levi - Strass*, edited by Richard and Fernande De George, Anchor Books, New York, 1972, pp. 59-79.

16. Irwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Doubleday and Co., Inc., New York, 1955, p. 26.
17. Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture", *VIA*, v.2, p. 135.
18. See De Saussure article "Course in General Linguistics", *op. cit.*, pp. 69-75.
19. It may seem appropriate to introduce at this point the notion of 'bricolage'. Claude Levi Strauss, in *The Savage Mind*, p. 16, states: "There exists among ourselves an activity which on the technical plane gives us quite a good understanding of what a science we prefer to call 'prior' rather than 'primitive', could have been on the plane of speculation. This is commonly called 'bricolage' in French. It is Rowe and Koetter in "Collage City", page 83, that carries this to a process of using 'whatever is at hand'.
20. Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method", *Arena*, August 1967, p. 275.
21. Mario Gandelsonas, "On Reading Architecture", *Progressive Architecture*, March 1972, pp.72-74.
22. Charles Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, The University of Chicago Press, 1938, 12th ed., 1970. Also Mario Gandelsonas, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
23. Giulio C. Argan, "The Architecture of Brunelleschi and the Origins of Perspective Theory in the Fifteenth Century", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, IX, 1946, pp. 96-121. Another article that may be useful is: Rudolf Wittkower, "Brunelleschi and Proportion in Perspective", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, pp. 257- 291. A very good analysis of the Flagellation by Piero della Francesca can be found in an article by: R. Wittkower and B.A.R. Carter, "The Perspective of Piero della Francesca's Flagellation", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, pp. 292-302 and an article by Marlyn Aronberg Lavin, "Piero della Francesca's Flagellation: The Triumph of Christian Glory", *Art Bulletin*, December 1968, pp.321-342.
24. Giulio C. Argan, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
25. John Coolidge, *Studies on Vignola* (abridgment of dissertation), New York, 1950, p. 9.
26. Edward Fry, *Cubism*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1966, p. 36.
27. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1941. For a better understanding of Giedion's definition of 'space - time', you might read the chapter, *The Research into Space: Cubism*, pp. 434-443.
28. Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision*, p.77.
29. Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal", *Perspecta* 8, Yale Press, 1963, p. 46. Rowe and Slutzky wrote another article on Transparency that appeared in *Perspecta* 13, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal ... Part II."

30. *Ibid*, p. 48.

31. *Ibid*, p. 48.

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