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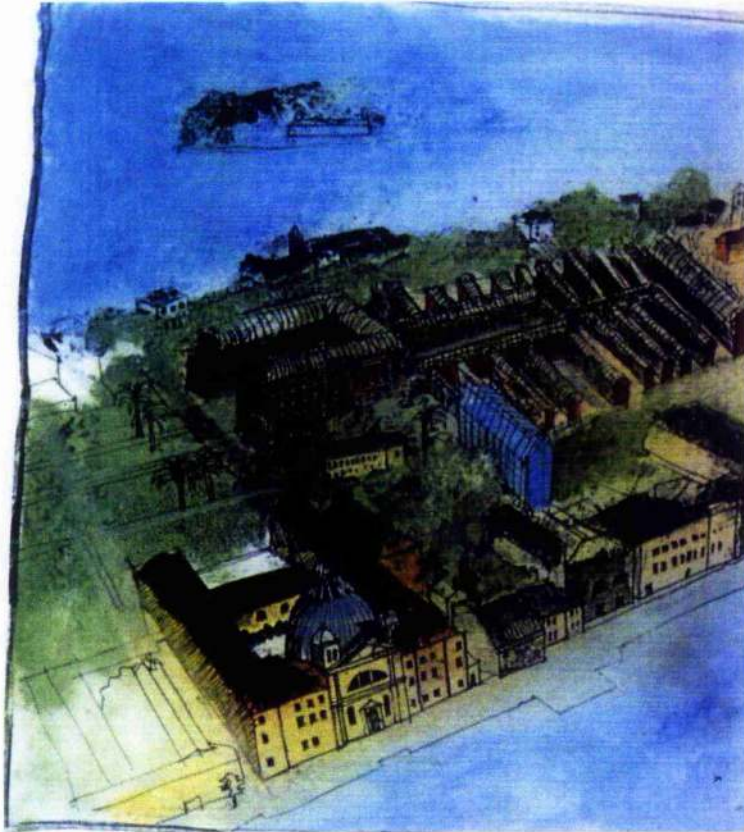
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Venice: Behind the Mask An Architectural Study



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M.Phil Thesis. December 2006.

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Again...

My beautiful, my own

My only Venice – this is breath!

Lord Byron from *The two Foscari*

Synopsis

This study will illustrate and explore the conservation policies and procedures adopted by the authorities in Venice and investigate the legalities of restoration practice employed by the state. As well as this, Venice's struggle for a new sense of identity is a premise for this study. The role of modern architecture in Venice and the type of design that could find a sympathetic home here is explored. Essentially, the question of the future of the architectural fabric of Venice, both prospective development and the conservation of what already exists, is the theme of this work.

Chapter one outlines the designs for the Biennale competition of 1991, *Una Porta per Venezia* and uses it as an opportunity to highlight the particular difficulties for the architect in creating an architecture for Venice. Issues such as the essential tension between the traditional and the modern, and the relationship between a building and its site are explored in this chapter. An assessment of the competition entries, and specifically the winning design by Dixon Jones, is used as an attempt to establish the preferences and priorities of the Biennale panel, many of which are directly responsible for any future development of the built environment in Venice.

Chapter two seeks to set the Dixon Jones project in its wider context and underlines the ambiguities and inconsistencies in which new development in Venice is managed. It attempts to determine possible motivations behind the inclusion of certain designs into the historic fabric and the omission of others.

In illustrating recent admissions to the built environment, Chapter two explores the theory that modern architecture in Venice has been a slave to traditional typologies and that this has impeded the formulation of an appropriately modern architectural language for Venice.

Chapter three outlines and examines restoration practice in Venice. It proposes that the interventions have, as a whole, been destructive and investigates where the system of management and the laws that govern conservation in Venice are inadequate. Specific instances of the harsh restoration techniques employed by the state are illustrated and examples of conservation projects carried out by international agencies, as an alternative to those of the Venetian authorities, are also outlined. This chapter argues that the working methods of the state and those of the international funding bodies represent two different philosophies, and essentially, distinct interpretations of the future of Venice. It suggests the city council in Venice perceives the city's future as transformation and the International funding bodies as conservation.

Table of Contents

Synopsis.	I	
Table of Contents	III	
List of Illustrations	V	
Acknowledgements	XII	
Introduction	XIII	
Chapter One	<u>Una Porta per Venezia</u>	1
	The Designs	7
	The Dixon Jones Design	19
Chapter Two	<u>The Search for Identity</u>	28
Chapter Three	<u>The Other 90%</u>	60
	The Venetian House	66
Conclusion		92

Apendices	<u>Appendix 1 - Illustrations</u>	96
	<u>Appendix 2 – List of Jurors</u>	136
	<u>Appendix 3 – List of Builds for Venice</u>	137
Bibliography		153

List of Illustrations.

- Frontispiece to Chapter One. Piazzale Roma, 1933.
Picture supplied by Leo Schubert.
- Frontispiece to Chapter Two. Brunetto De Batte's design for Piazzale Roma.
From La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Frontispiece to Chapter Three. Goya, *Satan Devouring his Children*, c1822.
Prado Museum, Madrid.
From www.bridgemanart.com

Figures

- Figure 1. Kyuzaburo Ishihara's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 2. The Bruce Kelly Group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 3. The Dixon Gilmour Group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 4. Aldo Aymonino's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.

- Figure 5. The Stan Allen Group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991
- Figure 6. The Johannes Mronz group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 7. Richard Scoffier's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 8. Gino Valle's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 9. De Graeuwe's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Figure 10. The Dixon Jones design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.

Plates

- Plate 1. Map of Piazzale Roma.
From www.venicexplorer.net
- Plate 2. Piazzale Roma, Venice.
Photographed by writer, March 2004.

- Plate 3. Santa Lucia Railway Station, Venice.
From www.viewsofvenice.com
- Plate 4. Santa Lucia Railway Station, Venice.
From www.viewsofvenice.com
- Plate 5. Santa Maria Novella Railway Station, Florence.
From www.en.tav.it
- Plate 6. Andrea Martinelli's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 7. The Carlo Cuomo Group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 8. The Mauro Artibani Group design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 9 – 10. Augusto Romano Burrelli's design for Piazzale Roma.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 11. The Aurelio Cortesi Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 12. Tetsuya Kadowaki's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.

- Plate 13. The Lapayse Luque Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 14. Massino Martini's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 15. Jorge Silvetti's design for the Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 16 & 17. Brunetto De Batte's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
La Biennale Catalogue, 1991.
- Plate 18 – 20. The Dixon Jones proposal for Piazzale Roma, 1991.
Pictures supplied by Dixon Jones.
- Plate 21. Palazzo Masieri Project. Frank Lloyd Wright, 1953.
From L. Querci della Rovere, *Le Venezie Possibili: da Palladio a Le Corbusier. Tre Progetti per Venezia rifiutati: Wright, Le Corbusier, Kahn*, 1984
- Plate 22. Palazzo dei Congressi plan. Louis Kahn, 1968.
From David Brownlee, *Louis Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles & New York, 1991.
- Plate 23 & 24. Gateway to Venice design. Frank O. Gehry. 1998.
Pictures supplied by Frank Gehry's office, Los Angeles.

- Plate 25. Design for New York. Frank O. Gehry. 1998.
Picture supplied by Frank Gehry's office, Los Angeles.
- Plate 26. The Bauer Grunwald Hotel.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 27. Venice Fire Station.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 28. I.N.A.I.L building, Venice.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 29. House on the Zattere.
Photographed by the writer, September 2004.
- Plate 30. San Giobbe housing scheme. Arch. Vittorio Gregotti.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 31. ICAP housing complex, Giudecca. Arch. Gino Valle.
Photographed by the writer, September 2004.
- Plate 32. Mazzorbo housing scheme, Arch. Giancarlo de Carlo.
From B. Zucchi, *Giancarlo de Carlo*. Butterworth
Architecture. Oxford 1992.
- Plate 33. Housing on Giudecca. Arch. Cino Zucchi.
Photographed by the writer, September 2004.
- Plate 34. Venice hospital extension. Arch. L. Semerani & G. Tamaro.
From *Domus*. No. 688. Luciano Semerani e Gigetta Tamaro.
Ospedale a Venezia. 1987.

- Plate 35. Biennale Bookshop. Arch. J. Stirling.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 36. Extension to San Michele cemetery island. Arch. D. Chipperfield.
Supplied by the Chipperfield practice.
- Plate 37. Century Tower, Tokyo. Arch. N. Foster.
From www.fosterandpartners.com
- Plate 38. Willis, Faber and Dumas Head Office, Ipswich. Arch. N. Foster.
From: www.fosterandpartners.com
- Plate 39 - 40. Design for extension to Santa Maria Novella train station, Florence. Arch. N. Foster.
From www.ferroviedellostato.it
- Plate 41. Kansai International Airport Terminal. Arch. R. Piano.
From V. Magnago Lampugnani. (trans. David Kerr). *Renzo Piano, 1987-1994*. Elemond SpA. Milano, 1994.
- Plate 42. Workmen loading barge.
Photographed by the writer, September 2004.
- Plate 43. Sant' Anna house. Arch. U. Camerino.
Photographed by the writer, October 2004.
- Plate 44. House on Rio terra S. Leonardo
Photographed by the writer, October 2004.

- Plate 45. House on Calle Cristo.
Photographed by the writer, October 2004.
- Plate 46- 48. House on Calle Bressana.
Photographed by the writer, February 2003.
- Plate 49-50. Working on the Venice canals.
Photographed by the writer, March 2004.
- Plate 51. House on Calle Beccaria, Venice.
Photographed by the writer, September, 2003.
- Plate 52 -53. Sacca Gerolamo Housing complex, Cannaregio.
Photographed by the writer, February 2004.
- Plate 54. Cappella Emiliani, Venice.
Photographed by the writer, September 2002.
- Plate 55 – 56. *Masegni*.
Photographed by the writer, January 2005.

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Introduction.

With its high tides and flooding, so familiar as a recurrent threat, Venice has become a metaphor for the survival of the old, the delicate and the exotic. It is generally perceived as the most intact of all historical cities; unchanged, enduring and not contaminated by alterations or the intrusion of modernity. Those who wish to kneel at the altar of history come to worship in Venice.

That Venice is perceived as the eternal, changeless city is a consequence of its role as an allegory of ruin. The Venetians subscribe to this as for them the historical meaning of their city resides in the material fabric of the city itself. For the foreign custodian the value of Venice lies in its representation of time past and the romance of the city is only heightened by the idea that it is crumbling. Fragile and vulnerable to the elements, the fact that Venice has survived at all is part of the marvel, the romantic legacy of the city.

This *passéisme*; this obsessive cult of the past and preoccupation with the 'tragedy' of Venice has bred an insularity, a reluctance for change and a fear of the modern. Born of a Venetian nostalgia and foreign narcissism, since the fall of the Republic the reconstruction of the old, *Dov'era, Com'era*, has always triumphed over the advocacy of the new. In a city that was forced to accept that economic viability lay in tourism, where it was so easily demonstrated that the new went against the interest of the old city, the modern was *contra* Venice. However, whilst Venice has not embraced the modern, it is a mistake to believe it has remained in aspic. Despite its nostalgic

tendencies, Venice has always been subject to change. It evolved from the primitive Byzantine Venice of the ninth century, with its reed huts and unadorned San Marco to the glorious and opulent city of the 16th century, its Golden Age. A great deal changed after the fall of the Republic in 1797 and the city has continued to change and be changed. During the last two centuries the city has been altered significantly, both at its centre and its margins. It has undergone major and continual structural transformations, with the creation of totally new areas, such as the Giardini Pubblici, the island of San Michele and the port of Marghera. In 1912 Massimiliano Ongaro claimed that revision and renewal were the very forces which had created Venice; “beautiful because she was always modern, for that is the tradition and the essence of her life.”¹

The perception of Venice as a monument to history, propagated by Venetians and foreigners alike, renounces any acknowledgement of the continuing vitality of the place. There is still residential life in the city, but the desire to preserve Venice as a mausoleum has increasingly threatened to extinguish the last remnants of a Venetian society. The changing modern needs of this community does not always accord with foreign expressions of Venice, and more often than not, the needs of the Venetians are secondary to foreign opinion. It is, as one Venetian has claimed, ‘the end of Venice as a city for Venetians’².

If Venice is to survive as a living, functioning city and preserve its physical habitat, then it has to learn to adapt and respond to the modern world. Whilst Venice has

¹ M. Ongaro. *L'Architettura Moderna a Venezia*. Lecture to the Ateneo Veneto, (9th February 1912). Istituto Veneto di Arte Grafiche, (Venice 1912).

² Leo Schubert. From an interview with the writer, January 2005.

always displayed an anxiety towards the new, the undeniable lesson of the past is that Venice has changed and it has survived. If the city is to avoid becoming a mere museum then the decline of the Venetian community and the dependence of the local economy on the tourism industry are issues that need to be addressed.

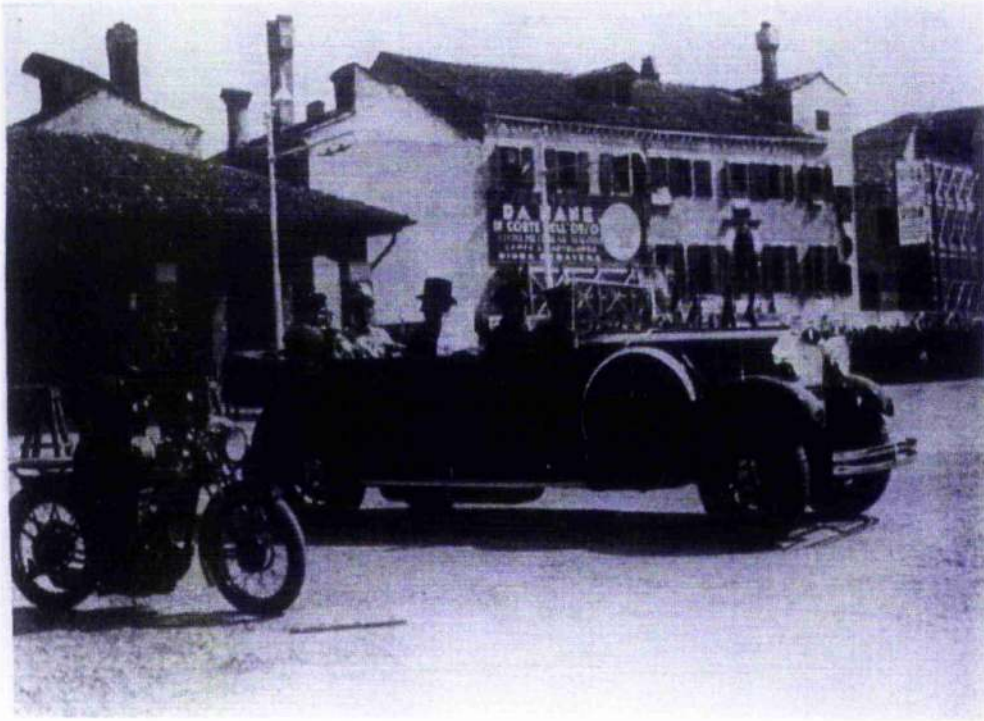
Redevelopment of certain areas within the historic centre and the creation of new industries would help generate new urban roles for the city and promote a modern, progressive city to the international community. Urban development and the admission of modern architecture into the historic fabric should not be regarded as a threat to the integrity of the historic environment. Indeed, the urban diversity of Venice, the variety and pluralism of architectural forms it houses, is testament to a city that is, by its very nature, inclusive. The international community and the Venetians themselves need to be convinced that rather than jeopardising the architectural heritage, additions to the built environment will only enhance the city's rich architectural heritage. Venetians need to accept that some forms of modernisation would enhance daily life and improve living standards, thus, encouraging young families to stay on the island. Sympathetic designs and new industries will breathe new life into this fragile city and critically, will help to persuade custodians of Venice to view this place as an 'incomplete' city.

The creation of a "sustainable Venice" depends also on the preservation of what already exists. Conserving the historic fabric, in all of its historic phases, is essential if the authentic character of Venice is to be retained. For decades the debate in the city and the international press has centred on the relationship between the built environment and its watery environs. Despite the corrosive effects of the waters,

Venice has survived the *aqua alte*, and will continue to do so. This study will argue that of considerably greater threat to the survival of the historic fabric is the treatment it currently receives from its own government.

While the global press perpetuates the notion that Venice faces impending death from its tides, and the international community wallow in the tragedy of Venice, the city is sinking under the weight of allegory. For too long *stranieri* have succumbed to the emotional charge of the city and, as this study will endeavour to prove, the consequences of this for Venice have been devastating. If we are to ‘save Venice’ then we must engage with a Venice that is *rational*. This study attempts to do just that. It is dedicated to a potential Venice.

Chapter One.



The arrival of the first car in Venice – Piazzale Roma, 1933.

Una Porta per Venezia.

The Site.

“This zone is an open wound, which successive administrations have modified from time to time, without ever effecting a satisfactory cure.”¹

In 1991 the Venice Biennale held a competition for a design for the bus station at Piazzale Roma entitled *A Gateway for Venice*. There was a huge response from international architects with 267 entrants in all. The jury included Rafael Moneo, James Stirling and Francesco Dal Co.² The British firm Dixon Jones were awarded first prize for their rotunda design.

The site for the new bus station is at the upper end of the Grand Canal, in the far west of the city (plates 1 & 2). The position of the site is in a utilitarian area of Venice, directly facing Ferrovia Santa Lucia and with Tronchetto and the industrial area of the city directly behind it. The area has been criticized since its inception; as early as 1941 Piazzale Roma was described by Duilio Torres as a “blob of oil”³, and in 1989 by Giorgio Bellavitis as “a vast and growing gangrene”.⁴ The area has been undeveloped since it was first conceived as the termination point of vehicular traffic after the Ponte della Libertà was built in 1933.

¹ L.Castany. *Venice: A Contemporary City*. BeauxArts Magazine. (Milan: Electa, 2003), P9.

² See appendix two for the complete list of the jurors.

³ Castany, p.3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The site itself consists of the bus station and taxi terminal and includes a number of crude structures which house services such as the ticket office and news stands. The structure of the space is dependent on the arrangement of the stances and the buses themselves provide only the most fragile sense of order. When the buses are parked they offer structure to the space, but this is lost as soon as they move away. The lack of cohesion is further characterised by the shape of the site which is made up of largely disparate and disproportionate areas. The architect is responsible for regulating the area and giving classification to its distinct parts, but this is made more complicated given the locale of the site. A glance at a plan of Piazzale Roma (plates 1 & 2) reveals that the site is made up of not only the piazza itself, but also the space leading to and including the frontage onto the Grand Canal. This presents the architect with spatial and aesthetic complexities that his design must address and resolve.

Eugenio Miozzi's uncompromisingly modern car-park was added to the western end of the Piazza in the 1930's and although this was originally intended to mark the termination point of the outside modern world and the entrance to the historic city, it lends itself to the transformation of the Piazza and the addition of a contemporary structure acting as a gateway to Venice.⁵ The architect should establish a relationship between this structure and his building due to its proximity, but his design would also have to acknowledge the more traditional 18th Century buildings that share the space facing the Grand Canal.

⁵ For more information regarding Miozzi's car park please refer to Ennio Concina, *A History of Venetian Architecture*, trans. by Judith Landry. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 315-316.

The site for this competition dictates the need for the structure to involve in dialogue with its environment, but it is selecting an appropriate architectural *language* for Venice that has for decades been the difficulty for architects. Designs that have been realised in the historic centre since the 1930's have either expressed the desire to engage in current ideological discourse, or chosen to retreat from the modern movement and work with already formulated languages.⁶ Both methodologies have produced contentious structures failing to provide Venice with a new and idiosyncratic architectural identity.⁷ However, the current climate in architectural studies could provide Venice with more apposite structures. The post-modern mood encourages a contextual approach to design; it looks to harmonize tradition and modernity in the same architecture; it opts for stylistic diversity and offers a typology of compromise. Perhaps an architecture that 'compromises', is the only kind that can integrate convincingly into the urban environment of Venice. The city's architectural fabric is made up of a hybrid mixture of forms imported from abroad through cultural exchange. New architecture should look to acknowledge this pluralism and add a new layer of history to that already embedded in the morphology of the historic city. Venice *is* capable of admitting new architecture, as it has done throughout its history, and the undeveloped site of the Piazzale Roma is an opportunity for the architect to explore and formulate a new architectural language for Venice.

"Architects for Venice should act as dentists; the basic armature of the mouth is there, they should look to refine it and add bits in."⁸

⁶ For a full list of buildings constructed since the 1930's see appendix 3.

⁷ This will be explored in chapter two.

⁸ Edward Jones. From an interview with the writer, March 2004.

Bus-stations, railway stations and airports are infrastructures of the modern city and should be allowed therefore to be appropriately modern. In Italy they have been the type of structure that has been permitted to express their modernity, albeit in an appropriately sensitive manner. It was only a year after the Frank Lloyd Wright proposal for the Masieri project was declined⁹ that the considerably less sympathetic and more emphatic new railway station was incorporated into the urban scene in Venice (plates 3 & 4). Despite its situation on the Grand Canal the design for the railway station proved less contentious because of its inherently modern connotations. This is not to say however, that bus and rail stations integrated into the historic fabric in Italian cities disregard their built environment. The design for the 1932 Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence illustrates how the assimilation of any new structures into the historic city always resulted in trepidation. The initial design for the station by Angiolo Mazzoni, which might be described as a monumental Tuscan vernacular with an exterior arcade of Romanesque arches, was surrounded by controversy because it was believed to have been too obtrusive and inappropriate considering the historic church of Santa Maria Novella situated just across the piazza. The sculptor Romano Romanelli discredited the design in *La Nazionale* in 1932, claiming that it was an error to design a monumental train station for a city with such a rich artistic heritage such as Florence:

“Like an elevator in a beautiful palace, a railroad station in Florence should be functional yet unobtrusive. Just as the elevator most appropriate for a palazzo will be the least visible, so too the best Florentine train station will have the most inconspicuous, the least offensive and the least

⁹ See Chapter Two.

visible form possible.”¹⁰

The design that was eventually realised, and the station we see today (plate 5), adhered to Romanelli's call for anonymity. Giovanni Michelucci and 'The Tuscan Group's' structure adopts an unassuming modesty through its colour and form. It is a low horizontal structure with large and simple surfaces and few openings, the majority of it constructed in the same unpolished *pietra forte* Florentine stone of the church of Santa Maria Novella. At the time of its construction it was praised for possessing the “faculty of blending in with the surroundings.....invisibility has been perfectly achieved.....The new train station of Florence is there but is not seen”.¹¹ And yet, at the same time everything about the form of the design is suggestive of movement, velocity and essentially, modern transport. The low horizontality of the building and its parallel lines of slightly raised stone work give the sense of moving vectors and a contained energy. On the façade a “cascade of glass” flows down from the roof to the ground to signal the entrance for the building. This building is a rare example of a structure that successfully merges a contemporary or modern form with a respect and regard for the history of the site and the more traditional buildings surrounding it.¹²

Similarly, Piazzale Roma is a place where modernity and tradition meet, essentially, a point of contradiction. Architects for the Piazzale Roma competition should seek to explore this essential tension of the site through the development of a form and style

¹⁰ Agnoldomenico Pica. *Recent Italian Architecture*. (Milan, 1959), p89.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p90.

¹² In 2003 the TAV held an international competition for an extension to the Santa Maria Novella train station. Sir Norman Foster was awarded first prize and details of his design can be found in Chapter 2.

that expounds similar architectural principles as those expressed in Michelucci's train station.

The Designs.

The brief specified by the Biennale for this competition consisted only of a few sentences outlining the facilities the design should include: ticket office, waiting room and refreshment area. There was very little indication of the desires or expectations of the Biennale, thus they encouraged free interpretation of the project and site. This is further suggested by title of the scheme. Although a bus station for Venice has utilitarian connotations, the competition was entitled *A Gateway for Venice*, which conjures up grand and symbolic meanings for the project. The question of balance between the practical and the poetic would prove to be the key to the success of a design and the catalyst for the most interesting and challenging proposals.

As outlined above, the main problem for the architect is that the site incorporates both the Grand Canal and the piazza itself. The piazza is situated within an industrial area of the city and its utilitarian connotations as a place for the automobile, the symbol of contemporary life, suggests that only a modernist approach to the design would be appropriate here. The Grand Canal, however, has always been the city's most effective stage for the display of Venice's opulent past and architectural heritage. Along with Piazza San Marco, the Grand Canal is the most sacred site in all of Venice and the most fiercely protected by conservatives, so only the most deferential structure could find a home here. The architect's design must reconcile the two sites.

A number of proposals have avoided resolving the contradictions of the site and the relationship between the design and the surrounding built environment. Kyuzaburo Ishihara's entry [Figure 1] is one such design. It proposes a terminal underneath



Figure 1

ground level at Piazzale Roma.

The entire area would be roofed with glass and then covered in a vast pool of water. This would ensure that a contemporary structure built using modern techniques and materials could be realised without interfering with

the surrounding historic structures. This project however, fails to take into consideration the delicate nature of the site. It seems somewhat irresponsible to endorse an underground structure for Venice, given the fragile nature of the ground on which the city is built. A "*sottomarino*" bus station is a novel and innovative idea, but

in Venice, it can only be considered impractical and unrealistic. This design might subsequently be considered as a piece of architectural fantasy for Venice.

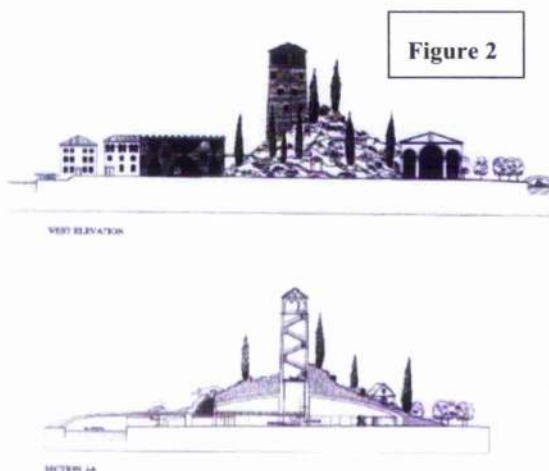


Figure 2

Similarly, the Bruce Kelly group [Figure 2] have submitted a design

that conceals the structure of the bus station. A large, synthetic, artificial hill is used

to disguise the mechanical and industrial area of the Piazza. It also has figurative connotations, as an allusion to the city of seven hills. Other Roman references incorporated into the scheme include a trevi-style fountain and a triumphal arch, through which vehicular traffic pass on their approach from the Ponte della Libertà. The Roman citations in this proposal are not intended as a mere derivative from the name of the site, but are an allusion to the historic legacy of Venice. This scheme endeavours to present the Piazzale Roma as an ancient, and subsequently sacred, site, and as such, offers a gateway that acts as a monumental and imposing entrance into the historic city. Arguably however, this proposal is too vociferous given the nature of the site and the manner in which it is used. The bus station is, in the majority, utilized by those travelling to and from work in the *centro storico*. In view of this, the design might be considered too ostentatious, and therefore, inappropriate. Kelly's design is intent on paying homage to an ancient Venice, but this is not compatible with the creation of an appropriately contemporary structure. Here, absolute preference and priority is given over to the site, and the bus station is consequently concealed rather than celebrated. This design fails to contribute to the formulation a new architectural language for Venice. It neglects to address the challenges that this particular site, and Venice itself, presents for the architect.

Both the Ishihara group and Bruce Kelly proposal look for ways to avoid resolving the complexities of the site, and in doing so, only add to the culture of anxiety that has surrounded new building in Venice for decades. The majority of the 267 designs, however, *do* attempt to resolve the incongruities of the site.

The Dixon Gilmour Group's design [Figure 3] proposes a novel solution, unique to the two hundred and sixty seven entries. The architect looks to resolve the contentious issue of the relationship between the two sites by correlating them. The

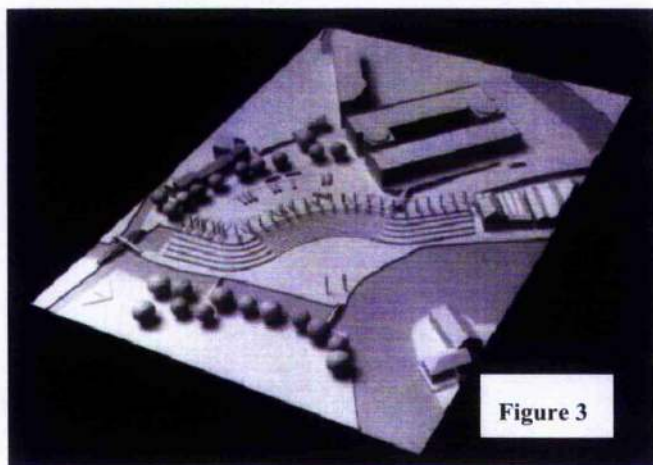


Figure 3

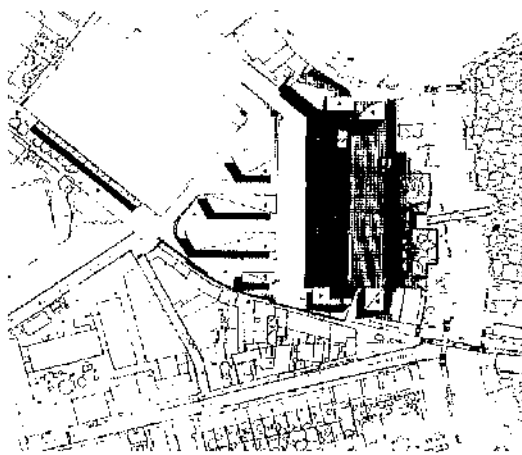
space is imagined as one large, uninterrupted, open area but steps leading down from the Piazzale Roma onto the Fondamenta Chiara clearly delineate two zones; differentiating between inside

and outside of, Venice. The Piazzale Roma essentially becomes a viewing platform from which to survey the spectacle of the Grand Canal and therefore totally deferential to the more historic aspect of the site. Although this design effectively marries two distinct sectors, it fails to offer sufficient shelter or an adequate refreshment area.

The most common solution to the incompatibilities of the site offered in the 267 entries is the division of the site into two zones, many using two distinct structures to differentiate between them. In many cases a more sympathetic façade on the Grand Canal also effectively screens the more modern structure of the bus station behind it. This can be seen in Number 44 for example (plate 6), where a façade typical of the palazzo further up the Grand Canal is used as a sympathetic frontage, concealing the more contemporary structure of the bus terminal behind it.

Others use more blatant methods, such as creating a partition wall that separates the piazza from the Grand Canal and effectively conceals the area and traffic behind it

(plates 7 & 8). This can be seen, for example, in Augusto Romano Burrelli's design (plates 9& 10). Burrelli has effectively created two distinct areas by building a wall diagonally across the piazza, clearly, and perhaps rather crudely, demarcating the bus terminal and the service building which faces onto the Grand Canal. The design does not enclose the Piazzale Roma in a structure, it simply organises the space for the buses into a more rational and fluid area. Here preference is given to the site facing the Grand Canal and little respect is paid to the utilitarian aspect of the project.



Several adopt a similar strategy of using a partition to divide the area, but make more use of the opportunity to organise and construct the space. This can perhaps best be seen in number 174,

Aldo Aymonino's design

Figure 4

(figure 4). Aymonino's

proposal clearly defines two areas; that of the Piazza itself, where passengers board and disembark the buses and to the eastern end of the square, an area which includes a smaller piazza and structures that face onto the Grand Canal.

'The Gateway' is used here as a point of transition between two worlds, the contemporary world of the automobile and that of historic Venice and the boat. The spatial configuration of the scheme is used to generate a tangible sense of this transition for the visitor to Venice. The passenger physically and metaphorically leaves the modern world as he disembarks from the bus and moves through the arcade to the small piazza and then onto the structure on the Fondamente Chiara where he awaits the arrival of the boat. The movement of the *pedonale* and their passage

through the zones are carefully controlled and the phasic sense imparted by the plan ensures that the scheme reaches a climax with the Grand Canal. This gradual movement through the space also affords an opportunity for the passenger to adjust to the pace of Venice, where the rhythm of the city is dictated by the movement of the tides and the motion of the boat on the water. Venice does not harbour the frenetic energy so typical of other cities and a rejection of the car for the boat is a potent symbol of this. This design celebrates Piazzale Roma as the point where this transition occurs.

The *fessura*, or gap, between the two structures on the Grand Canal is used as another mechanism to control the movement of people. This may also allude to the urban fabric of Venice itself; narrow streets and alleyways that eventually open out into large and spacious piazzas. In the same way the piazza offers respite from the intense stratification of the city; the channel leading through the scheme culminates in the basin of water and views of the city. It heightens the climactic effect of reaching the historic site of the Grand Canal as the view from inside the area would only imply its presence.

“The whole city is a plastic experience, a journey through pressures and vacuums, a sequence of exposure and enclosures, of constraint and relief.”¹³

In Aymonino’s design the anticipation and energy generated by the journey over the Ponte della Libertà and the vigorous movement of the automobile is contained within the Piazzale Roma. Aymonino’s proposal chooses to restrain and regulate the energy

¹³ G Cullen, *Townscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1990) Sourced from D, Chapman, *Creating neighbourhoods and places in the built environment* (London: Spon Press, 1996).

and drama of the space and allows it to be released and find expression in the spectacle of the Grand Canal. In this way his design pays homage to Venice and acts as a deferential gateway or entrance into this historic city.

The general shape and layout of the proposed terminal in Number 66 (figure 5) is also

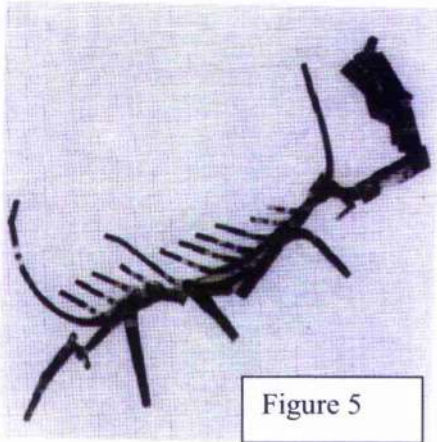


Figure 5

suggestive of the Piazzale Roma as a point of transition. Covered passageways, or tunnels, leading from the piazza down through the Papadopoli Gardens to the Fondamenta Chiara, characterise the Piazzale Roma as “a portal to the past”.

Another proposal in the *Gateway to Venice* competition that investigates the relationship between space, time and reality is the Johannes Mronz group (figure 6).

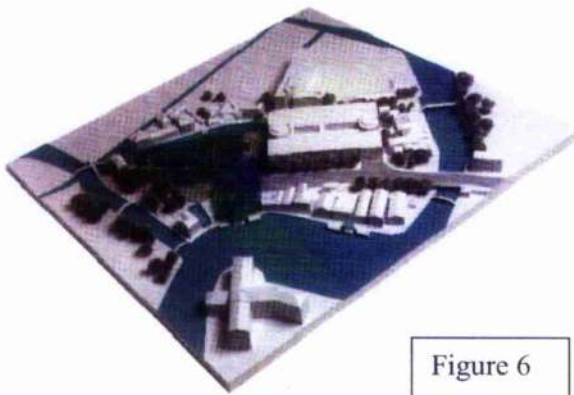


Figure 6

Their design is made up of several distinct buildings which are housed under one large glass roof. The spaces between each structure each contain floor to ceiling height mirrors. Similarly, glass and mirrors are used as

adornments throughout the design to reflect and confound time, space and reality. It encourages us to look and this is symbolic of Venice as an essentially visual city.

“It is all for the ear and the eye, this city, but primarily for the eye.”¹⁴

The mirrors are used to amplify the infinite, to both reflect and act as a reflection of Venice and its timeless and unquantifiable nature. Similar to Aymonino’s design and Number 66, this project presents the Piazzale Roma as the point which separates the real from the imaginary, that is, the outside world from Venice. The Mronz group have adopted the symbolic nature of the ‘gateway’ as the principal language for their architecture. It exists then as primarily a commentary on its site and essentially, on Venice. This project is by no means, however, the most poetic or symbolic proposal that was submitted to the competition. Some proposals focus wholly on the poetic potential of the site, creating an architecture that uses its formal elements to translate symbolic and allegorical interpretations of Venice. The architect Douglas Garofalo submitted a proposal that covered the piazza with a roof in the shape and form of a mask. Clearly the mask is synonymous with the *carnivale*, and therefore with Venice itself, but it may have other implications. It may be used to suggest that Venice is essentially a city of artifice, a superficial place that exists primarily as a theatre, or as a stage-set for the tourist. Perhaps the architects also wish to express the ambiguous nature of the site, “somewhere between the outside and inside”¹⁵.

The Aurelio Cortesi group’s maze-like design (plate 11) uses the spatial configuration to reflect the urban fabric of the historic centre. When viewed from the Grand Canal the strong verticals of the design are reflected in the water and this symbolizes the

¹⁴ R. De Combray, *Venice, Frail Barrier* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1975), p iii.

¹⁵ Aldo Rossi uses this phrase in his book *A Scientific Autobiography*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1981) p42, with regards to his 1980 design for Venice *Teatro del Mondo*. I feel that it is appropriate here as both designs make reference to the cult of spectacle and display that is such an inherent part of Venetian culture.

Piazzale Roma as the point where the land; *terraferma*, meets the water and the island city of Venice.

Other are simply abstract interpretations of the competition, the designs presented are mere caricatures, too elaborate or fantastical to have been realised.¹⁶ Some of the models submitted were more like sculptures than actual representations of a prospective building. It would seem that some entrants interpreted this competition as purely an opportunity to exhibit at the Biennale, and their designs are akin to those produced for the *Imaginary Venice* the Biennale promoted in the 1980's.

In an attempt to avoid excessive sentimentality, arguably displayed in the purely symbolic designs outlined above, some architects create thematic designs that focus on one single concept or theme. This can be seen for example, in number 23, Richard Scoffier's design [Figure 6]. Here Piazzale Roma is regarded as "an island for the



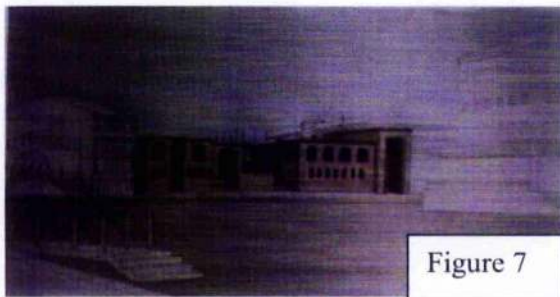
automobile", and the language of the automobile permeates into every aspect of the design. The main piazza, where the buses congregate, is divorced from the surrounding structures, where the ticket office and facilities are located.

This area, the 'island', is housed under a large roof, contemporary in style and made of galvanised steel, the material used in the bodywork of a bus.

¹⁶ Examples include numbers 12, 29, 43, & 113. See plates 12 & 13.

Number 25, Irmfried Windbichler's scheme, makes reference to the stilts and piles on which much of Venice was built. The space on the Fondamenta Chiara is defined by a series of architectural sculptures, that is, wooden stakes driven deep into the ground. Similarly, Massimo Martini's design (plate 14) fills the Piazzale Roma with ninety-nine vertical steel sculptures, much like narrow pylons, all precisely equal in height to Miozzi's garage. The whole area is walled in and the entire site becomes one large industrial zone.

Number 36 [Figure 7] is a notable proposal because it considers the possibility of the future transformation of the space. The structure is not permanent, but constructed in



a manner that would ensure it could be easily dismantled at a later date.

This design proposed that new architecture in Venice should accommodate the current climate in

the modern movement, and acknowledge its uncertainty. It suggests that modern architecture and historic Venice are not compatible and cannot co-exist. The entire building is made of wood and the form of the design assumes the fragmented urban form of the city. This is not one solid, compact structure, the design is made up of several distinct buildings all connected through corridors or bridges. It is an innovative proposal, but the building does not adequately unify and consolidate the site and its temporary nature implies an apprehensive modernity.

Number 10 (plate 15) was presented with a special prize of recognition at the awards ceremony in Venice. This design was wholly deferential to Venetian building

typology and traditional construction techniques. The style and form of the building, and the materials to be employed in its construction, adhered to local building types. The methods of construction also faithfully followed the practices and principles of the original builders. The space leading onto the Fondamenta Chiara is punctuated by a series of pillars, and the views framed by the pillars on the approach to the vaporetti stop are intended to represent 'post-card' images of Venice. The architect, Jorge Silvetti, claimed that the proposal was a tribute to the indifference that Venice had shown to the urban phenomenon of the 20th Century.¹⁷ According to Silvetti, an architectural language for Venice should denote the delicate nature of the Venetian environment and its architectural legacy. Evidently, the panel from the Biennale concurred, and they approved of the concepts this design endorsed.

Another project that made reference to local building types is De Batte's design (plates 16 & 17). The form and scale of the buildings along the Grand Canal recall Venetian vernacular architecture, and typical features of the Venetian house, such as porticos, balconies and 'Carpaccio chimneys', are also incorporated into the design. The buildings are treated in a thoroughly contemporary fashion however, with an emphasis on the flatness of the exterior surface and the working of abstract, geometric shapes into the design. De Batte's proposal does not make any distinction between a prospective bus station and a design for a Venetian house. He interprets the competition as purely an opportunity to formulate an appropriately modern architectural language for Venice. His scheme promotes the idea that *any* new building in the historic centre must seek a balance between traditional typologies and contemporary design if it is to integrate successfully into the built environment.

¹⁷ See www.machado-silvetti.com

Other designs submitted to the competition propose overtly modern structures that make no attempt to acknowledge the historic environment.¹⁸ Many make no

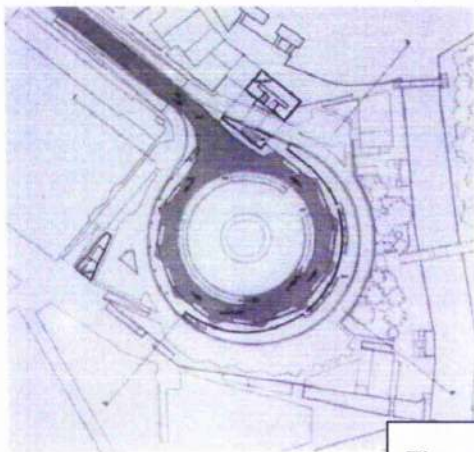


Figure 8

reference to Venice or the particular nature of the site and are therefore, not site specific. These designs are primarily concerned with the functional aspect of the building and creating mechanical solutions to the organisation of the space and the arrangement of the buses.¹⁹ The most

advanced technologies are used so as to create the most practical and efficient building possible. According to the principles expressed in these designs, a bus station should be allowed to be appropriately modern, regardless of more historic buildings surrounding it.

In De Graeuwe's design (Figure 9) the bus station is imagined as a pavilion, positioned directly on the edge of the Fondamenta Chiara. The building is essentially regarded as a decorative addition and does not attempt to make reference to anything

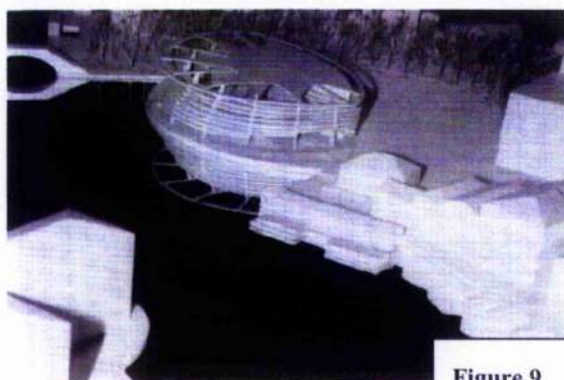


Figure 9

beyond itself. The model submitted by the firm [Figure 9] indicates that the design does not endeavour to establish a relationship with the neighbouring structures. The form of

¹⁸ Number 8, 59, 64 & 182, for example.

¹⁹ Gino Valle's design is a good example. Figure 8.

the building is determined purely by the shape of the site and its aquatic outlook. A band of trees are designed into the scheme, behind the building at the northern end of the site, effectively enclosing the structure and its piazza. However, the view of the building from the approach of the water would have rendered it a conspicuous addition to the urban fabric. Perched on the edge of the *fondamenta*, the building would be incorporated into the sightline and would thus inevitably be read in relation to, and as a continuation of, the other buildings along the Grand Canal. This design does not seek a relationship with its site and its uncompromisingly modern form is incompatible with the more traditional buildings that line the canal's edge.

The diversity of the designs submitted to the 1991 Biennale is indicative of the many ways in which the competition was interpreted.

The Dixon Jones Design.

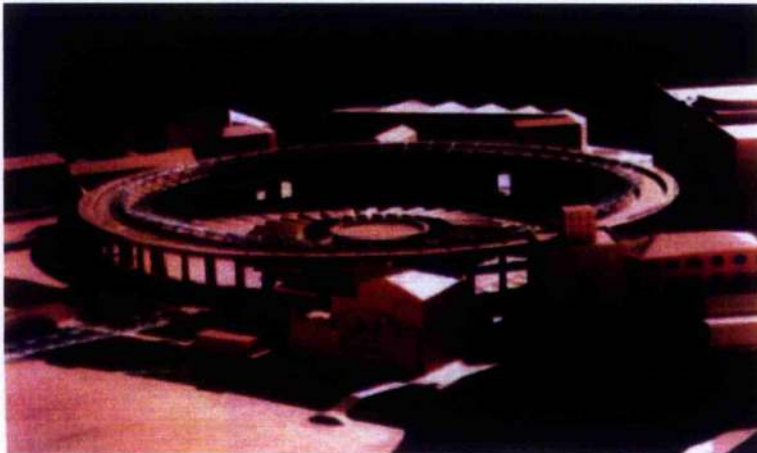


Figure 10

First prize was awarded to the British firm Dixon, Jones for their rotunda design based on the Roman Colosseum and the Circus at Bath in England (figure 10 & plates 18 - 20). The circular form arises as a mechanical solution to the organisation of the buses and the plan reflects the rotation of the road coming into the space; the cul de sac at the end of the causeway.

The design consists of a number of levels. The ground floor perimeter affords space for twenty platform spaces with the inner radial providing space for thirty parked buses. The public amenities and offices are situated around this perimeter band. The first floor level connects existing bridges and gives visitors a view of the interior space; this then leads onto a raised terrace overlooking the Papadopoli gardens on the eastern side of the building. The building is designed to accommodate the climate extremes of the city as well as dissipate dangerous diesel fumes. It takes the form of a continuous open colonnade made of concrete which supports a rudimentary glass and steel canopy inspired by the traditional Italian street parasol.

The design makes a distinction between this space, occupied more by vehicles than people, and the typical urban space in the rest of the city. Here the pedestrians do not promenade in the space but are contained at the edge of it, it is the buses that are in the centre and on display. It was this aspect that Dixon Jones felt leant the project its contemporary nature and it was the form of their design that could reflect and emphasis this.

The type of pure geometry expressed by the circle and the order this generates is atypical in terms of Venice. Most of the urban spaces in Venice are imperfect in

some way with St Marks square and the rest of the city's piazzas being made up of imperfect rectangles. The Dixon Jones design does not attempt to replicate the urban fabric of Venice in Piazzale Roma, but rather seeks to differentiate this space from the rest of the city as an orderly and utilitarian area. Much like the train station in the city, where everything is straight and ordered, with the emphatic horizontals of the uncompromisingly modern structure itself, the form of the Piazzale Roma is alien to the urban environment of Venice, but is permitted to be different.

The circular format of the Dixon Jones design would be seen externally only from incidental views and one might describe the external expression of the design as 'quiet'. Their design is conceived of as very much an interior, as "a new room inside the city"²⁰. The passenger would gain access to the main terminal through a series of informal passages which would open out into a surprisingly dramatic interior space. This has Venetian counterparts in the spaces one would approach down minor paths that lead into an extraordinary void or volume, as at Piazza San Marco. The incidental views that the exterior affords means that this vast structure, 112 metres in diameter, appears to sit modestly in its site. Each of the sight-lines was carefully considered by the firm, particularly the aspect from the Grand Canal. The main building would be situated back from the Grand Canal thus, from this approach only a small portion of the entire scheme would be visible.

It is also important to consider that this design *contains* the traffic of the Piazzale Roma. It regulates and systemises the area, but also conceals the traffic from view from the Grand Canal.

²⁰ Edward Jones. From an interview with the writer, March 2005.

In relation to Miozzi's garage, this proposal seeks to establish an indifference to it in compositional terms. The scale of the garage means that it dominates the space and buries the Piazzale Roma. The Dixon Jones scheme places the two structures close together so that the garage does not become part of the containing edge of the Piazzale Roma. The space left between the two structures, the rectangular object and the circular one, encourages them to be read separately.

Dixon Jones recognized the delicate nature of the site and were conscious not to do too much with their project; they were aware from the outset that what was needed for this project was restraint. Therefore, they paid careful consideration to the symbolic elements of their design. They incorporated a water feature into their plan and placed it at the heart of the complex, but ensured that it performed on a practical level too. In the winter months rain would fall from the canopy as a cylindrical wall of droplets through which only the buses would have to penetrate. In the hot summer months the giant water sculpture could be turned on and the water curtain would induce a movement of cold air around the interior space. They also drew parallels between the Customs house and the bus station, as a metaphorical front and back door to Venice. The customs house dates from the eighteenth century and is situated at the beginning of the Grand Canal on the eastern side. The architects gave this broader symbolic intention by adding a facsimile of the golden ball from the top of the customs house to the roof of their design for the bus station. They use a small and simple object loaded with meaning to convey a symbolic message. This is typical of the understated and subtle gestures throughout the entire scheme.

The Dixon Jones proposal looks to express its contemporary nature in an appropriately sensitive manner. It resolves the question of how to produce a modern structure that is sensitive to its surroundings by conceiving an essentially interior scheme. The design expresses itself only in relation to itself, and externally, there is a minimum of reference to anything beyond itself. The cracked surfaces of their scheme ensures that it is not laid out as some sort of triumphal axis relating to something beyond itself.

The design is consistently sensitive and mindful of the surrounding urban fabric. It evidently embodied all of the qualities that the Biennale panel were looking for in a bus station for the Piazzale Roma, so why then has it never been realised?

“It was rather like going to a party and dancing with someone and then they ignore you at the end. There was a terrible sense of disappointment.”²¹

Both Jeremy Dixon and Edward Jones were conscious of the Biennale’s record with regard to unrealised designs for Venice, but for them there was an aura of optimism surrounding the 1991 competition; that this was a very real opportunity to build in the city. They were aware of plans to redevelop the industrial vicinity, and a bus station for the Piazzale Roma could only act as an improvement to the city, so there seemed little reason to doubt the sincerity or authenticity of the competition. Fifteen years later their design remains on paper and the Piazzale Roma lies undeveloped, but the firm have never been offered an explanation as to why the bus station has never been

²¹ Edward Jones. From an interview with the writer, March 2005.

built. Instead, they can only hypothesise; thus, the following possibilities as to why it remains on paper are precisely this, possibilities rather than certainties.

This project may never been realised for purely circumstantial reasons. At the time of the competition, in the early nineties, Venice was undergoing something of a renewal with the Venice council investing in schemes such as Gregotti's housing scheme in Cannaregio, the conversion of the Molino Stucky building and the Zitelle congress centre, amongst others. The Piazzale Roma project perhaps could not secure the appropriate funding or financial commitment from the relevant authorities.

In 1991, shortly before the winner of the competition was announced, the then mayor was found to be embezzling money from the city council, and it was his partner that managed the bus company. This too then may have influenced the proceedings.

These reasons are credible, but Edward Jones believes that one must consider a more cynical explanation; that there was never any intention to build at Piazzale Roma, that the competition was purely rhetoric for the Biennale. One looks at the site today, "the dustbowl" as one Italian journalist referred to it,²² and the work being done to rejuvenate the surrounding area and it seems that the Piazzale Roma would be the first and most obvious choice for redevelopment.²³ When one considers the fact that the bus station is used primarily by residents of the city or those travelling to work in the historic centre and not the tourist, perhaps the lack of incentive to build becomes less peculiar. When Perilli's train station was built in the city in 1953 the train was

²² *Il Gazzettino*, 3rd November 1996, p5.

²³ This work includes the multi million euro Calatrava bridge connecting Piazzale Roma with the Fondamenta di San Lucia and the train station. See catalogue of buildings in appendix three for details of this design.

considered the *only* way to arrive into Venice, “anyone who was anyone arrived by train”²⁴. The culture of bus stations in Italy has never enjoyed the same kudos and so Piazzale Roma would not be perceived as an illustrious entrance to the city. The majority of tourists to Venice still arrive by train and boat, not by the bus. In 1991 plans for a sub-lagoon rail network between the airport at Tesserà and the Fondamenta Nuove were also being discussed. This transport system would cater specifically for the tourist and it would seem that this was, and still is, considered a more worth-while investment.²⁵ Similarly, 2003 saw the completion of the new Port Authority building, a multi-million Euro welcome-centre for the thousands of tourists arriving into the city by cruise liners.²⁶

A bus station in Venice would effectively exist for the Venetians and it would seem there was little impetus to invest in a project that would not benefit the tourist in some way.

Perhaps we might also consider the possibility that the competition *was* held with the intention of building the bus station, but when the Dixon Jones proposal was awarded first prize there were those that opposed it. Edward Jones informed me that at the award ceremony for the competition in Venice a prominent member of the panel had told him, in no uncertain terms, that the design would never be realised. This was not intended to cause offence to the firm, but it was simply that such a significant project, such a prominent insertion along the Venice skyline, could not be given to an architect so wholly unconnected to Venice.

²⁴ Edward Jones. From an interview with the writer, March 2005.

²⁵ Plans were passed in 2004 and the sub-lagoon system is scheduled for completion in 2008.

²⁶ See catalogue of buildings in appendix three for details.

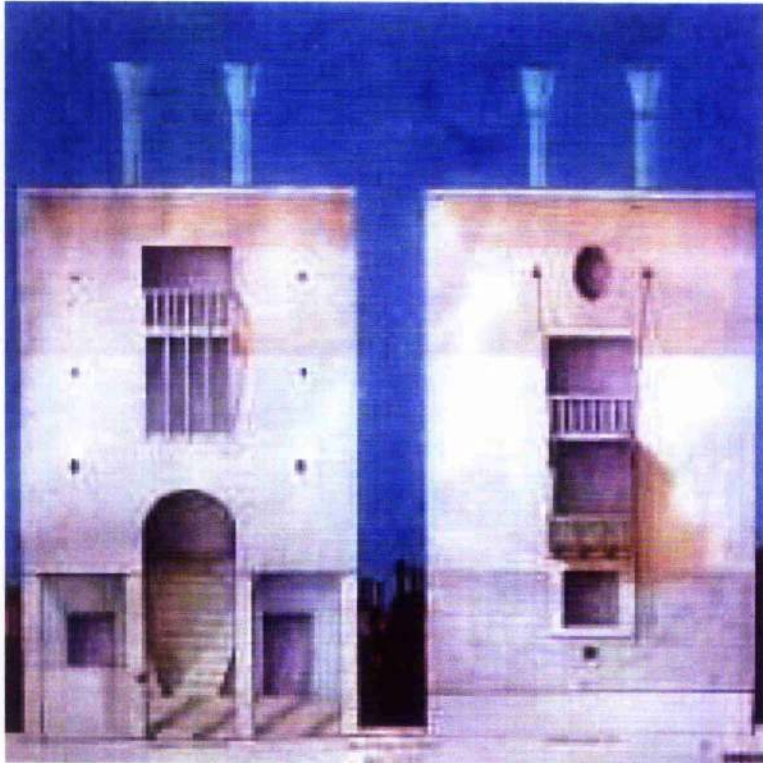
The fact that the design was awarded first prize indicates that the Biennale panel endorsed the architectural principles advocated in the proposal. The firm's reputation as specialists in producing sensitive structures for fragile and historic environments undoubtedly influenced the judges.²⁷ Their work was also well known to James Stirling, one of the panellists, who confessed to Jones and Dixon at a later date, that he had championed their design.

The fact that every aspect of the scheme was determined in response to the nature of the site would have been appreciated by the panel of judges. The Dixon Jones proposal is based on an attempt to reconcile the Piazzale Roma, and Venice in general, with contemporary design. Essentially it looks to establish an architecture that is appropriately modern, but is suitably sympathetic to the historic environment

The Dixon Jones' *Porta per Venezia* was a very real opportunity to dispel the anxiety surrounding the admission of modern architecture into the historic centre of Venice.

²⁷ Examples include Somerset house, The Royal Opera House and The National Portrait Gallery in London.

Chapter Two.



"In architecture, is a good question greater than the most brilliant answer?"

Le Corbusier.

C, Entwistle. *Le Corbusier.*
Concerning Town Planning. 1948.

The Search for Identity.

The Dixon Jones project for the bus station at Piazzale Roma is the most conspicuous missed opportunity to develop a site in Venice in recent times. In Venice, however, the project appears to have been accepted as mere rhetoric for the Biennale of '91 and there are few there that would recall that a design for a bus station ever existed. This general ambivalence in the city towards designs or development plans has grown out of the Biennale's persistence to promote Venice as 'the city of the imagination' for the architect; the place of architectural fantasies. Designs for Venice have consequently been more given to poetic symbolism and utopian imaginings than to urban reality.

The competition for the bus station at the Piazzale Roma, however, was presented by the Biennale as a very real opportunity to build in the city. The project was discussed in terms of part of a wider initiative to redevelop the areas on the periphery of the historic centre. Despite a discernable Venetian indifference to the Dixon Jones project, the 1991 competition should not be considered akin to previous years, where the Biennale played host to mere meditations for Venice, like the 1978 competition entitled *Immagini per Venezia* for example.¹ The 1991 competition was affiliated with the Venice Council who were keen to promote the Piazzale Roma project as confirmation of their commitment to invest in the rejuvenation of the more neglected areas of the city.

¹ For details of the 1978 competition please refer to Margaret Plant, *Venice: Fragile City. 1797-1997* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), chapter 10.

Reasons as to why the design for the bus station has remained on paper have been explored in the previous chapter, but the project is considerably more significant than a mere missed opportunity to develop the Piazzale Roma. The true significance of the Dixon Jones design lies in its failure to be realised. The project encapsulates many of the issues that have plagued the admission of new architecture for decades and it illustrates the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the way in which new development in Venice is managed. The Dixon Jones experience gives us an invaluable insight into the policies and procedures used in the architectural management of the city, and crucially, is indicative of the attitudes of those responsible for endorsing them. The illustrations of the Dixon Jones design are *the* most poignant symbol of Venice's struggle in its search for identity. The undeveloped site of the Piazzale Roma that stands in Venice today is testimony to the inordinate scale of controversy and complexity that surrounds the admission of new architecture into the historic centre. This chapter will investigate the contentious relationship between Venice and modern architecture and examine the complexities that the Dixon Jones case underlines.

Decisions regarding any architectural development in Venice are controlled, or certainly heavily influenced, by members of the Architectural Institute, the IUAV, who are affiliated with the Biennale. During the post-war years, Giuseppe Samona had been responsible for increasing the school's prestige with his notable contributions to urban theory and practice and this had attracted distinguished non-Venetians to the faculty. It was talent that was cultivated within the walls of the school that was utilized throughout the second half of the 20th Century in the infiltration of a number of new designs into the historic landscape. Architects who

became associated with the school included Carlo Aymonino, Aldo Rossi, Luciano Semerani, Vittorio Gregotti and Ignazio Gardella; all of whom subsequently had their designs realised in Venice.² This ensured that new buildings in Venice were all rooted in theoretical investigation, like examining the role of urban planning and establishing the relationship between urban typology and building typologies. The school bred and encouraged a culture and ethos of insularity that is, in many ways, still evident today.³

Edward Jones' exposure to the politics of architecture in Venice described in the previous chapter is similar to that experienced by Frank Gehry. Gehry who, like Dixon Jones, is still waiting for building to start on his design for the conference centre at Marco Polo airport, described the capriciousness and continual "back-tracking" of the relevant authorities in Venice with regards to the project.⁴ Although recently, there have been a number of international architects successful in having designs realised, such as Boris Podrecca, David Chipperfield and Michael Carapetian,⁵ the majority of those accepted have established links with the city and the Architectural Institute. Both Jones and Gehry expressed the same sense of being viewed sceptically as an outsider; "the architects in town can create problems because they don't want people like me in there"⁶

² For details of their designs please refer to catalogue of buildings in appendix three.

³ Considered the most powerful man in architecture in Venice today, Vittorio Gregotti is currently working on three of the most significant works of architecture that Venice will have seen for decades; the new Guggenheim Museum of Contemporary Art, the reorganisation and restoration of the San Giorgio island and the new library for the Ca' Foscari University. Please see appendix three for details.

⁴ Frank O. Gehry. From Mildred Friedman, *Gehry Talks: Architecture and Process* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999), p289.

⁵ See catalogue of buildings in appendix three for details of their designs.

⁶ Friedman p289.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the most successful architects in realising designs in Venice have been Venetian. The single most prolific architect in Venice of the 20th Century was the Venetian Carlo Scarpa. Scarpa's work displayed an expressiveness that was recognised as deeply Venetian. His architecture was praised for its powerful sense of asymmetry and a sensitivity to materials; qualities which were assigned to his 'Venetianness'. Even the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, who was often sceptical of ties to place, acknowledges the sense of *venezianità* in his work.⁷ It should also be noted however, that Scarpa's work in Venice was restricted to interiors.

Brenno Del Guidice, also born in the city, was responsible for some of the major infiltrations into the historic centre in the 1930's, including the fire station on the Rio Nuova and the Venetian and Italian pavilions at the Biennale Gardens. Ugo Camerino is a contemporary Venetian enjoying notable and unprecedented success with regards to having designs realised in the historic centre. The recently completed Port Authority building is a Camerino design, as is the new extension for the hospital at San Giovanni e Paolo and the new housing scheme at St Anna. Camerino also won first prize in the 2003 international competition for an exhibition centre at the Venice Port.⁸

The fact that the large majority of projects are awarded either to Venetians or those associated with the architectural school is indicative of the attitude continually promoted by the architectural elite in the city; to design for Venice one must 'know' Venice. This is not to recognise the morphology of a place, which would presumably

⁷ See M. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*. 1944- 1985 (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1989) chapter 6.

⁸ See catalogue of buildings in appendix three for details of these designs.

be important for an architect designing for any city rich in architectural heritage, but 'knowing' Venice has special connotations. Precisely what it is to 'know' Venice in the way required is not easily ascertained, but it would seem that being able to claim a Venetian heritage gives an architect an innate sensibility and understanding of the city that goes beyond familiarity.

If decisions regarding future development in Venice are determined by those at the Architectural Institute, then it is perhaps not surprising that they should choose to utilize and champion talent cultivated within the school. Nevertheless, the ease with which a Venetian or an architect involved with the IUAV has their designs realised in Venice is conspicuously at odds with the difficulties experienced by international architects. This is made especially apparent when the proposals rejected by the Venice Council include those of 'modern masters' Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. Margaret Plant claims in her book *Fragile Venice* that the fact that all three were denied the opportunity to build in Venice was symptomatic of Venetian prejudice against the new.⁹ Undoubtedly Venetian censure was a contributing factor, but the fact that new buildings were being constructed in Venice at the time these designs were submitted suggests that the Venice Council sanctioned some and eliminated others; each proposal being subject to a rigorous selection process, rather than a climate of fear amongst Venetians determining the fate of these designs.¹⁰

In the case of Frank Lloyd Wright, his 1953 design for the Masieri Foundation on the Grand Canal (plate 21) was rejected by the authorities on the grounds of an apparent

⁹ Plant, p349.

¹⁰ For buildings included at the time these designs were rejected see catalogue of builds in appendix three.

failure to “evoke the beauty of Venice”¹¹. They claimed that the proposal was “ignorant of tradition”¹² and “too bold and irreverent”¹³ a design for Venice. In defence of the project Wright argued that the design was “as Venetian as Venetian can be. Not imitation, but an interpretation of Venice”.¹⁴ It was an interpretation that made reference to Venice in the most subtle manner:

“Venice does not float upon the water, but rests upon the silt at the bottom of the sea”.¹⁵

The strong verticals of the design recall the reeds rising from the water and works to link the contemporary structure organically with its site. The large windows and extensive use of glass in the design are used to reflect the spatial composition of Venice, where space is essentially not felt as a closed form but where canals and lagoon ensure the feeling of continuum. Thus the design expresses and accentuates the relationship between the outside and interior space. Large balconies and transparent corner pilasters also ensure extensive views of the Grand Canal. The references were clearly too obscure for the authorities and the entire project too abstract an interpretation of Venice, by an American, who despite his status as a modern master, was wholly unrelated to the city. In his article *Dimenticare Venezia*, Luciano Semerani alludes to the perfidious nature of the Venetian authorities and the deference Wright was willing to grant them:

¹¹ Quoted in Luisi Querci della Rovere, *Tre Progetti per Venezia rifiutati: Wright, Le Corbusier, Kahn*. In *Le Venezie Possibili: da Palladio a Le Corbusier*, 1984, [n.p] p270.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Rovere, p. 271.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

"The letters that accompany the drawings in the treacherous Venetian world are filled with a humility and respect that do not renounce dignity."¹⁶

Wright's design appears to have been entirely misinterpreted by the Commune in Venice and the wider architectural community. Despite the Council's claims that the design was disrespectful, it had in fact been conceived in a reverential awe for Venice and her exceptional environment. As Carlo Scarpa writes; "Wright proposed a work for his time, without forgetting that the essential feature in Venice was and is water."¹⁷

Whether or not the authorities in Venice genuinely misunderstood Wright's intentions, there is little doubt that the lack of regard for the historic nature of the site and the surrounding fabric would have provoked their disapproval, and therefore it was in their best interests to promote the design as wholly inappropriate.

Despite Le Corbusier's association with the Architectural Institute in Venice, his considerable prestige within the city and the special invitation from the mayor to design a hospital at Cannaregio, his 1964 proposal for Venice was never realised.¹⁸ The design was viewed sceptically by the Venetians and was fiercely opposed by many within the architectural school. The proposal was typical of the kind of investigations Le Corbusier was making in his late works, namely ways of creating tension and ambiguity between buildings and their surrounding fields. Le Corbusier was interested in exploring the relationship between a building and its site in Venice,

¹⁶ Luciano Semerari. *Zodiac 20. Dimenticare Venezia*. In *Rivista internazionale di architettura* (Milan, July 1999), p 120.

¹⁷ Francesco Dal Co. *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2002), p297.

¹⁸ For a fully illustrated account of this design, with the plans and models, see Wolfram Fuchs, Robert Wisner, *Le Corbusiers Krankenhausprojekt für Venedig*. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1985).

and the essential tension that exists between the historic site and modernist principles in architecture. He conceives an overtly modern structure, but one that makes reference to Venetian typologies. The design was a low, horizontal structure, careful not to interfere with the Venetian skyline. The structure would declare itself as a new addition to the historic fabric by the extension of the site out into the lagoon, using the traditional wooden piles to create a platform on which to build. Small rectangular courtyards are arranged in the scheme and the corridors were intended to mirror the Venetian *calli*. The most controversial aspect of the scheme, and the most obvious indicator of Le Corbusier's desire for the hospital to be perceived as an entirely modern intervention, was the inclusion of vehicular access to the hospital. A bridge was intended to link the hospital with the train station situated across the water. For Le Corbusier, only a design that unashamedly expressed its modernity could be considered a meaningful addition to the historic fabric.

"When you must reconstruct, make it the most modern architecture possible. Don't seek to copy the old bricks and the old Venice made by hand".¹⁹

Louis Kahn's design for Venice was the Palazzo dei Congressi building of 1968 (Plate 22). The building was to be used by the Biennale, but was to have a constant function as a congress centre, accommodating 2,500 to 3,000 people. This design was the most sympathetic to Venice, and the one that most obviously sought Venetian correspondences. The palazzo was envisaged in reinforced concrete with marble details, with a longitudinal plan and an internal bridge-like structure that would link the function halls. The rectangular form of the structure is reminiscent of the Palazzo

¹⁹ Agnoldomenico Pica, 'Il progetto di Le Corbusier per l'ospedale di Venezia'. *Domus*, 427 (1965), p.7.

Ducale and the building was to be surmounted by three lead-covered domes in frank homage to San Marco. Parapet windows and a series of interior balconies ensured views of the lagoon.

"Working on my project I was constantly thinking as if I was asking each building I love so much in Venice whether they would accept me into their company."²⁰

Venetian references are sought and found in Kahn's design, and for this reason especially it is surprising that it was never realised. Official reasons as to why the project was declined by the Commune were never documented, but there appears to have been a general lack of support for the project within Venice itself. It might also be suggested that the references incorporated into the design did not adhere to the Commune's "ideal Venice". Kahn gives his building a Venetian context by incorporating Venetian 'pointers' into the scheme. This offers superficial associations with the city rather than any real consideration or meaningful commentary on the nature of the site.

All three projects are indicative of the various shades of resistance in Venice coming to the fore and the beginning of a general acceptance of "the whole environment as comprehensively inviolable."²¹ Arguably, priorities and preferences in Venice have not changed with time and the conservative attitudes that opposed these projects are working to ensure that other designs remain on paper. The Dixon Jones bus station is an obvious example, but Frank O. Gehry's project for Marco Polo airport might be

²⁰ As quoted in David Brownlee, *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture* (Los Angeles and New York: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991), p405.

²¹ G. Samona, 'I progetti di architettura per Venezia', *Progetto Venezia. Ricerche e sperimentazioni sull'area veneziana*. Exhibition catalogue. (Venice, 1980), p 58.

considered more apt, a modern-day equivalent perhaps, given his status as a 'modern master'.

The project for Marco Polo airport at Tessera (Plates 23 & 24) will consist of an enormous complex of interdependent buildings which will house a new terminal for the airport, a grand hotel, a congress centre and exhibition space, along with a marina. The project has been given the strongly symbolic name "Gehry's Gateway", which is suggestive of its accessibility from two directions. The structure sits as an interchange point between 21st Century Italy and the airport, and the thousand year old city with its more traditional form of transport, the boat. It brings the airport directly in touch with the water, symbolic of Venice as a point where the past and present converge and co-exist. The structure acts as a prestigious gateway to the lagoon and Venice itself, projecting out over the water in the direction of the city, with views of the Veneto plains visible to the southeast and west. The structure is an optimistic expression of a future Venice and its economic viability, represented in its adoption of a strong, confident and somewhat flamboyant, architectural language.

Gehry's design interacts with its setting. He looks to join earth and sky, air and water but without the excesses of monumentalism. The undulating lines of each of the roofs give the building an oriental looking outline and a dream-like quality, but are also used to make reference to the aquatic setting. Light from the lagoon would reflect off the metallic roofing converting the entire structure into what Gehry described as "one luminous vapour".²² Gehry's references are, however, consequents of the aquatic

²² Friedman, p289.

setting, rather than a deliberate contemplation of, or commentary on, the nature of the site:

“The question: do we make an absolutely new thing that has nothing to do with Venice, or do we make a kind of homage to Venice but not like the real Venice, real architecture. I’m not going to do either of those things. I will probably make a new thing, and since it is on the water, it will look like it relates to Venice. It will have a familial relationship.”²³

For Gehry, the most important components of the design were those that would ensure a lightness of form and perfect technological functionality; architectural principles that are expressed in his work as a whole. In this design he continues to probe geometry and form and manipulate shapes and materials to create sculptural objects that could be described as ‘somewhere between art and architecture’. The Venice Gateway design can in many ways be regarded as a sequel to his Guggenheim museum at Bilbao, and a similar response to siting on water can also be seen in his design for a new Guggenheim museum in New York (Plate 25). There is little, therefore, to distinguish the Gateway as exclusively Venetian, which no doubt provoked disapproval in Venice, given their preference for visual references to the city and its ‘special nature’.

Similar to Wright’s, Le Corbusier’s and, to a certain extent, Kahn’s proposals for Venice, Gehry creates a design that is firmly located in its site but is not overly

²³ Friedman, p290.

anxious in its attempt to make poetic references to Venice. Establishing Venetian correspondences in the design is secondary to other, more personal, architectural enquiries. Also, a building by a modern master will always assume a subtext; acting as an “example” of their work. For the Venice Council, this lack of anonymity may have detracted from the buildings ability to act as an emphatic homage to Venice and encouraged the structure to ultimately be considered as part of the legacy of an architect. One might consider the possibility then, that the Venice Council have *consciously* avoided incorporating designs by internationally renowned architects into the urban fabric of Venice.

The idea that the authorities in Venice have so closely regulated and conditioned the admission of architecture into Venice is unquestionable. In a revealing interview given in May 1978,²⁴ Carlo Scarpa alludes to his experience of this:

“I’ve had nothing but trouble from planning rules in Venice and the bureaucrats who interpret them. They order you to imitate the style of ancient windows, forgetting that those windows were produced in different times, by a different way of life with “windows” made of other materials, in other styles”.²⁵

In Venice, Scarpa writes, designing interiors allowed him the “freedom” of expression that architecture would not afford him.

Examining the post-war architecture that *has* been incorporated into the historic centre will reveal that the majority share a lexical, morphological and symbolic

²⁴ Published in Dal Co, (2002), p297-299.

²⁵ Dal Co, (2002), p298.

content; they are all intent on making reference to Venice. They all share the use of the analogy, obviously based on a subjective, but not arbitrary interpretation, of the city or one of its parts or characters. Unlike the designs submitted by the 'modern masters', they are simply 'lessons in Venice'.

It is the promulgation of the 'special' nature of Venice endorsed and promoted by the Architectural Institute throughout the last century that has encouraged the self-referential tendency in architecture. Analytical studies, theories and ideologies developed in the school relied on the interrogation of the past and a preoccupation with memory.²⁶ This produced architecture that was intrinsically narcissistic and nostalgic, struggling to define its relationship with the present whilst endeavouring to embody the past.

Perhaps Marino Meo's 1948 extension for the Bauer-Grunwald hotel (Plate 26) is the only structure wholly defiant of its context, the only truly uncompromising modern addition into the historic fabric of Venice. This is certainly the most contentious structure in the city and the one most often used by conservatives to illustrate the damage that modern interventions pose to the character of the *centro storico*. Meo's extension displays a brutal modernism and total disregard for the adjacent Baroque church of San Moise, the most extravagant façade in Venice. It is, of course, assessed purely on its aesthetic merit, but this *is* Venice; "the most visual place on earth.....a treat for all the senses, but particularly the eye."²⁷ Contentiously or not, the Bauer-

²⁶ An example is Saverio Muratori's *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia* published in 1959. This study analysed the typical forms of Venice so as to develop a critical methodology with which to reconstruct the historical process of Venice in new structures. In this study Muratori writes that new forms should "not overwhelm and destroy the past, but instead, perpetuate it by developing, articulating and enriching it", p9. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1959).

²⁷ Richard De Combray. *Venice, Frail Barrier*. (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1975), p 32.

Grunwald extension is largely perceived as an inappropriate and unsuccessful addition to the historic centre. The structure arrogantly renounces the historic context of the site and is wholly unsympathetic to the built environment. It suggests that architecture in the historic centre must acknowledge its site and, subsequently, make some reference Venice if it is to integrate successfully into the built environment. Is then, finding an architectural identity for Venice inextricably linked to self-reference? Is it possible to 'forget Venice'?

Brenno Del Guidice's 1934 fire station on the Rio Nuova (Plate 27) is often cited as the first uncompromisingly modern work to be built in Venice. It is a Rationalist building with emphatic arches opening onto the water and the boat docks outlined in Istrian stone. It has been constructed in an area which is largely original Gothic and Del Guidice has adjusted the scale and layout of the design to account for the surrounding buildings. Despite its unashamedly modern idiom the building does exhibit certain unmistakable signs of continuity with the past. The entrance for the boats is a variant on the Venetian *androne*, the traditional water entrance and the long balustrade of the *piano-nobile* is a Venetian reference, as are the corner rustications and Baroque style key-stones on the arches of the four deep *cavane*. Even in a building that advertises itself as stylistically modern, Del Guidice chooses to express the rich legacy of Venetian architecture through architectural accents.

A more subtle means of examining the relationship between Venice and Modernism was explored by Giuseppe Samona and Egle R. Trincanato in their Inail headquarters at S. Simone (Plate 28). Described by Tafuri as "a text of fragments and oblique

messages",²⁸ the Inail building looks to avoid the temptation of the iconographical tradition of the city, while structurally representing the city's proportions in its single parts. This is a commentary not on style, but rather on the urban site; the building looks to make reference to the basic principles of Venetian architecture as well as to the form of Venice itself. Samona breaks down the essential elements of the traditional Venetian building and reconstitutes them using a modern architectural language. This is an intelligent structure; Maretti called the project "one of the most interesting interpolations into the corpse of Venice"²⁹ and although not the most accessible, or sympathetic considering its site, it is generally perceived as a challenging, progressive and valuable addition to the architectural landscape of Venice. However, while the Inail building showed that Modernism in an historic setting was not impossible, it failed to offer contextualism. It might be suggested that the bland, rigid and heavy block-like structure is essentially a poor companion for the inflected and rich styles of existing architecture.

An interesting comparison can be made between Samona's structure and Ignazio Gardella's house on the Zattere (Plate 29). In contrast to the Inail building, the Zattere house deliberately seeks a dialogue with its environment and the basic and distinctive features of Venetian architecture. Gardella asserts his respect for the local vernacular in the irregular placement of narrow windows, the prevalence of balconies and the general architectural tone of the building. Traditional materials such as white Istrian stone and marble are used in the framing of the windows and balconies and the entire structure respects the curve of the *fondamenta*. Despite Gardella's attempts to venerate the historic landscape, the structure is somewhat conspicuous and sits

²⁸ Manfredo Tafuri *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*. (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1989), p66.

²⁹ 'La Nuova Sede', *Casabella*, 244. (October 1960), p7.

uncomfortably in its site. The insistence and severity of the vertical motifs and in the treatment of the balconies, and the height of the building in relation to its neighbours, all contribute to making this structure an uneasy dweller along the waterfront. The building is tense, static and lacks something of a 'soul' due to its persistence to refer to, or embody, the Venetian vernacular style. Although widely criticised by the architectural community at the time, the Venetians generally remain ambivalent to the house on the Zattere. Nevertheless, a building that epitomizes pastiche and imitation will not help allay the fears of the Venetian. This building is dangerously evasive and should not be considered a successful addition to the architectural fabric of Venice. Unlike Samona's design, which attempts to develop a new architectural language, Gardella's avoids this; he "avoids the pride, the presumption of being able to solve any problem at all"³⁰.

In his book *Ignazio Gardella*, Argan argues that the limitations of the Zattere house are due to the unrealised Wright design for the Grand Canal outlined above.³¹ Argan suggests that this project limited Gardella's imagination; it persuaded him not to search for "a poetry beyond form" and encouraged him to sublimate the environment rather than define it. Argan intimates that in this project for Venice the design was influenced by Gardella's desire to ensure that the project would be realised. However, I believe the Zattere house is too typical of the kind of investigations Gardella was pursuing in his architecture at this time for the 'Wrightian' controversy to have influenced the form of the structure.

³⁰ G. C. Argan, *Ignazio Gardella*. Edizioni di Comunita. (Milan, 1959), p27.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.42.

The Zattere house is typical of the type of domestic architecture that was constructed in Venice from the second half of the 20th Century. The working of references to local practice, or 'Venice markers' into the design became a standard practice. This was largely a result of public hostility to deviations from the Venetian type and a fear that modern forms would threaten the character of the urban environment. Intensive analysis of the pre-existing buildings and markers on the original site designed into the new scheme was a requirement for all architecture interpolated in Venice. Designs in the historic centre then, were especially conditioned and regulated by their site.

This can be seen in Vittorio Gregotti's housing for San Giobbe, 1984-87 (Plate 30). Here Gregotti revives the traditional wooden roof exterior, the *altana*, in conjunction with a series of outdoor spaces for each resident. His 'Carpaccio chimneys' are a conspicuous feature on the skyline and might be considered too obvious an indicator of 'Venetianness'. The design also accommodates markers of the original site which included a tall tree and an old industrial chimney.

Gino Valle's apartments on the Giudecca (Plate 31), dating from 1986, appear to have been absolved of the 'hyper-Venetianness' that pervades amongst most modern designs for Venice. The stark and formal appearance of the apartment block departs considerably from the ornamental Gothic so synonymous with historic Venice. However, by Valle's own admission, he had no intention of "cutting out a piece of Mestre and sticking it there on the lagoon".³² Valle's housing complex does subscribe to a self-referential Venice. It is sympathetic to the city's industrial past, echoing

³² Marco de Michelis 'New Projects at the Giudecca: Building Types and Morphology of the Island', *Lotus International* (1986), p139.

Molino Stucky's emphatic brick construction by creating towers like small replicas of industrial chimneys. The islands of the historic centre are recalled in the layout of the design and arrangement of the apartments; each preserving its autonomy with its own staircase. The *Calli* - the corridors between the buildings and the *Campi* - the communal squares in front - preserve a sense of traditional housing but without undue typological reference.

In 1986 a competition was held for public housing at Campo di Marte on the Giudecca. Ten international architects, all of whom notably had connections with the school of architecture or had participated in recent Biennales, submitted plans for a new housing scheme. Aldo Rossi's project³³ addressed the lack of facilities for local residents and he designed a complex of houses alongside a long gallery of shops and other local amenities. The winning design by Giancarlo Caniggia did not provide the residents with any such amenities, but was commended for his particular knowledge of the city's construction. As a pupil of Saverio Muratori, Caniggia displays an interest in the study of Venetian typology. His presentation emphasised the typological path that led from the simple dwelling, the *domus elementare* developed from the simple reed huts to the *portego* and lateral courtyards fully formed in the twelfth century. For the Venetian authorities, the capability of the building to acknowledge and make reference to its site was clearly favoured above all else.

Although Caniggia was awarded first prize in 1986, when work finally began on the redevelopment of Campo di Marte in 2003 it was in fact Aldo Rossi's design that had been adopted. Rossi's original plans had been modified and a Carlo Aymonino design incorporated into the scheme, but essentially it is the same 1986 plan. Reasons

³³ See catalogue of builds in appendix three for an illustration of Rossi's design.

for the abandonment of the Caniggia scheme in favour of Rossi's are not clear, but Rossi's death in 1997 and the fact that there is no permanent example of his work in the city despite his contribution to the architectural school, may have influenced the proceedings. Nevertheless, the passing of two decades has ensured that the decision to effectively retract first prize from Caniggia and realize Rossi's scheme instead, has occurred without query or criticism.

All of these projects show that architects eager to have their designs realised in Venice would subscribe to the format of tradition and repetition. However, how useful is typology if it is used merely as a form of reference, as seen in the examples above? These buildings would suggest that the preoccupation has been a restrictive and conservative methodology for modern architecture in Venice. Giancarlo de Carlo's housing scheme for Mazzorbo (Plate 32) is the first to display an alternative and more innovative approach to typology.

"Everything moves and changes and disappears, but history lingers".³⁴

Giancarlo de Carlo.

Mazzorbo is a small island in the Venetian lagoon about 10km from Venice and is separated from Burano by a narrow channel. The island has a long history and although today it is sparsely populated, in 1980 the Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo was commissioned to design 80 dwellings for the residents of the island.³⁵ In the preliminary stages of the design process De Carlo attended meetings with the

³⁴ Benedict Zacchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992), p167.

³⁵ Only the first phase of 32 dwellings was completed.

residents of Mazzorbo and he describes the importance of their participation in the project:

“If the attachment to a place is so strong then it is to the morphology of the place that one must look for the secrets of reciprocity between human beings and their physical surroundings because everything is recorded in its urban forms”.³⁶

De Carlo's Mazzorbo project is an example of the kind of theories and studies the IUAV were developing in the 1950's when De Carlo was an active member of the faculty. Venice, with its extraordinary symbiosis of architectural and urban form, was treated as a case study of the ways in which architecture interacts with its context. The emphasis was on developing an architecture firmly rooted in place and a clear methodology for active intervention in a historic setting. The Mazzorbo housing gave De Carlo the opportunity to articulate these theories in a visual format.

Detailed surveys carried out before the project was undertaken explored aspects of the islands urban form; the relationships between the insides and outsides of buildings, private and public spaces, the city and its waterways, as well as specific details of the local vernacular tradition. Special attention was paid to the use of colour characteristic of the architecture throughout the lagoon. The result is an architecture that affirmed the capacity of Post-Modern architecture to make reference to traditional typologies. De Carlo follows the bright palette and the continuous block-style of the indigenous housing, but the structures also reflect a typically modernist concern with giving visible external articulation to the interior space. Far from being simply literal

³⁶ Interview with Elia Barbiana. 'Intervista ai progettisti degli interventi ERP a Venezia', *Edilizia Popolare*, No. 175 (November-December, 1983), pp67-68.

transpositions of Mazzorbo and Burano's housing, where the facades are generally flat (except for the projecting chimney stacks), in each block distinctive ovals house the stairwells. The windows are simple, outlined in white in the traditional Istrian stone, but placed in unconventional groupings.

The housing complex at Mazzorbo is an example of Modernism within the Venetian archipelago, but it is a Modernism that expresses a profound knowledge of history, rather than the objectivity generally associated with the movement.

Wright's design for the Grand Canal is typical of his interest in the relationship between nature and architecture, or "the nature of the site".³⁷ His concern with the Venetian environment, expressed in the form of his design, is founded on his view of nature as the only permanent thing in a world of continual flux. As a result, architecture is not considered as permanent, but transitory, and therefore its place within history is not significant. It was undoubtedly this failure to consider history as the frame of reference for his design that made the project unsuitable for Venice in the eyes of the authorities. In the house on the Zattere, Gardella actively seeks a dialogue with the surrounding environment, and the forms of the building are wholly dependent upon this. "At bottom, a building is no more than the formal definition of an environmental situation,"³⁸ In its attempt to imitate or replicate the surrounding architecture, Gardella's house is in effect, falsifying history. It is a twentieth century structure in 16th Century costume; the structure is not historically honest but rather whimsical pastiche. At Mazzorbo, De Carlo investigates the *relationship* between nature, or the natural environment, and history. His project is concerned with

³⁷ G. Nordland, *Frank Lloyd Wright: In the realm of Ideas* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), p28.

³⁸ Argan, p31.

'reading the context' so as not to produce architectural episodes estranged from history. Here, nature and history are inter-related and interdependent, tradition is integrated with innovation. De Carlo looks to develop a dialogue with history that does not express itself in an artificial or apprehensive way.

Similar philosophies were explored by Renzo Piano in his 1980 design for the restructuring of the island of Burano.³⁹ Like De Carlo, Piano stressed the importance of 'participation' in creating an architecture for the community. He set up The Neighbourhood Workshop, and encouraged the contribution of the residents of Burano in the project, arguing that working with the community would help the architect to link a project with its users and its setting, crucial for successfully integrated architecture and what he refers to as 'gentle renewal'. Piano and his workshop carried out research and interviews with old artisans to discover the techniques once used in maintenance work. They used this knowledge alongside modern technology to restore some of the buildings in disrepair under the scheme.

"We have to create a bridge between the ancient memory and the technology of today. It would be wrong to take up a rigid position in relation to the past. Why give up the advantages of technology?"⁴⁰

The idea of establishing a 'bridge' was the most significant concept in this project. It advocated the need for a compromise between the traditional and modernity. The group argued that interventions in Venice should not reject the new out of prejudice but rather, distinguish between cases where it was acceptable and others where it

³⁹ For a detailed account of this project please refer to M Dini, *Renzo Piano: Projects and Buildings, 1964-1983* (London: The Architectural Press, 1984).

⁴⁰ Renzo Piano. From Dini (1972). P24.

should be avoided. Soft technologies and mobile instruments were used to “heal the ailments of the ancient city”⁴¹, without causing trauma to the historic fabric.

The importance of De Carlo’s Mazzorbo housing and Piano’s workshop should not be underestimated. They indicate a shift in thinking with regards to the compatibility of modern and more traditional forms of architecture.

The influence of the Mazzorbo housing scheme is lasting and is evident in the housing development schemes that followed. Cino Zucchi’s 2003 housing on the Junghans site, Giudecca, is one example (Plate 33). Like De Carlo, Zucchi looks to pay particular attention to the nuances of Venetian urban space, with clearly delineated references to the urban fabric of the city; *calle*, *campiello* (courtyards) and gardens. A series of new bridges are incorporated into the scheme so as to re-establish physical links with the Giudecca, and integrate the Junghans site with the life of the island. The picture shows how Zucchi has integrated an industrial chimney into the scheme; the structures are centred round this legacy of the area’s industrial past. The form and scale of the buildings recall ancient Venetian palazzi, but they are treated in a more abstract, contemporary fashion, with an emphasis on the flatness of the external surface. Materials are traditional: grey rendering on the street and canal sides, white in the courtyard, with cool white Istrian stone defining the openings in the walls, together with the slim timber window and door frames and shutters.

The arrangements of the openings, some recessed to create terraces, some flat, together with the stone frames reflect Zucchi’s interest in the styleless, vernacular character of Venetian domestic architecture. The result of Zucchi’s design is a

⁴¹ Renzo Piano, Dini, p24.

convincing and intelligent reinterpretation of Venetian types, and like De Carlo's housing at Mazzorbo, Zucchi looks to establish a compromise between the traditional Venetian vernacular and a contemporary architectural language.

In the restricted field of public architecture, the most important post-war building constructed in the historic centre was the extension to the civic hospital in the Scuola di San Marco in the 1980's by the architects Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro (Plate 34). As I have outlined above, apart from Meo's structure there is not a single project presented in Venice that does not attempt to "remember Venice" in its design, but the architect Semerani claimed that this was the only project to deliberately sidestep any mimetic tendencies.⁴²

"It is important to know history, but it is better to forget the past".⁴³

The development of the original hospital complex was a result of Le Corbusier's failed project for an entirely new structure at San Giobbe. The new extension was to be accommodated within an area already closely built, unlike Le Corbusier's plans which took advantage of its spectacular site overlooking the Cannaregio lagoon. Although the Semerani/Tamaro design does have a prominent frontage on the Fondamenta Nuova, the majority of the structure would be visible only from the interior courtyard. The overtly contemporary form of the structure was to signify the technological advances that this hospital represented. The building was designed as a vanguard of functional quality, technology and progress, and this was to be advertised by its exterior. Despite its contemporary character however, the structure shows a

⁴² See Luciano Semerani, 'Dimenticare Venezia', *Zodiac* 20 (July 1999), p142.

⁴³ L. Semerani. *Ibid*, p143.

sensitive regard for its site. The lagoon view from the front is referred to in the use of porthole windows. The almost cubic structure is pierced by a covered courtyard, a typical feature of Venetian architecture. On the rear façade, which is closer to the cloister idea of a traditional hospital, lunette formations bring to mind Codussi's façade for the Scuola di San Marco, still the hospital's principal entrance. The architects were to refer to the site along the Fondamenta Nuova as "the slightly sad edge of the city"⁴⁴ and described the placement of windows and elevations on the Fondamenta as having "a slow rhythm"⁴⁵. In their structure the placement of the windows are uneven and lack any real sense of rhythm, they move away from the obvious symmetry.

Although the design arguably displays a tendency to make reference to its site, it is not overly deferential and there is little doubt that the irregular counter-balancing treatment represents one of the major changes in building in Venice.

Similar to the hospital design, James Stirling's Electa bookshop in the Biennale gardens (Plate 35) adopts an uncompromisingly modern language that engages in dialogue with its environment. Venice is synonymous with water and the site for the bookshop in the gardens of the Biennale faces the lagoon, hence Stirling adopts the metaphor of the boat for his design; a 'boat-shop'. The entire structure is almost the exact size of a vaporetto and is 'anchored' by the huge entrance. Like a vaporetto, all-round windows offer a continuous view of the watery horizon. The overhanging eaves may be considered as a reference to the traditional *cason* of the Venetian marshes. In his review of the design Robert Maxwell suggests that the Biennale

⁴⁴ L. Semerani and G. Tamaro, 'Ospedale a Venezia', *Domus*. No. 688 (1987), p2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

garden setting, with a group of small buildings inside a formal garden, evoked ideas about nature and artifice, as in the “theoretical” scenes of painters like Claude:

“landscapes of the intellect where, in artfully composed “natural” settings, serene beings stand or recline, gratified to contemplate their own appropriateness, combining innocence and sophistication, savagery and nobility.”⁴⁶

This might be extended however, to consider Venice itself as a metaphor for nature and artifice. In 1483 Felix Fabri, a Dominican friar from Ulm who passed through Venice remarked; “the city has the ocean for a pavement, the straits of the sea for a wall, the sky for a roof”.⁴⁷ Venice is essentially indivisible from its setting. The relationship that Venice shared with its environment was exceptional and this formed the basis of its mythical appeal; for centuries its unique location in the waters of the lagoon, cut off from the earth, invited celestial comparison. For Ezra Pound, Venice is exceptional and unique because it grows naturally from the waters; it simply emerges from the tide. The buildings seem so organic that they become like nature:

“Marble trunks out of stillness.....the light not now of the sun.....There, in the forest of marble/the stone trees.....”⁴⁸

Le Corbusier too was fascinated with the relationship between Venice and its environment and the exploration of this formed the basis of much of his architectural

⁴⁶ Robert Maxwell, *James Stirling & Michael Wilford & Associates. 1975-1992. Buildings & Projects* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p251.

⁴⁷ Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour*. Yale University Press. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p4.

⁴⁸ Ezra Pound. *The Cantos* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), Canto XVIII.

studies of the city. Discussing the relationship between the land and sea in Venice, Le Corbusier describes the canal as “a friend to architecture, one of its greatest props”.⁴⁹

Nature and artifice are perhaps then inextricably linked in Venice. In Stirling’s design for the Biennale Gardens, the location of the structure allows it to separate itself slightly from the historicity of buildings within the *centro storico*. The context in which this building sits allows it to express itself in an appropriately modern way. Similarly, David Chipperfield’s extension to the San Michele Cemetery Island (Plate 36) has been permitted its modernity, seemingly due to the fact that it is an extension and completely new addition. A new island will provide space for an estimated twenty-five thousand more tombs and incorporate Venice’s first new park in over a century.

The London-based practice David Chipperfield Architects were awarded first prize in a competition in which 150 offices submitted CVs. Eight of these were shortlisted and invited to develop proposals, half of the final submissions being Italian and the remaining half from other European countries. Chipperfield’s simple, rational and craft-based approach has struck an aesthetic chord with the Italians and the firm has won three out of five major competitions that it has entered in Italy in the last few years.⁵⁰ In Venice, Chipperfield’s work has a particular resonance as comparisons are often drawn with Carlo Scarpa. Chipperfield and Scarpa share not only a regard for materials, but also a common treatment of space and volume. It was undoubtedly the simplicity and clarity of Chipperfield’s proposal for San Michele, rather than its

⁴⁹ Plant, p293.

⁵⁰ These include the Ansaldo ‘City of Cultures’ museum complex in Milan and the Salerno Palace of Justice. The practice is also architect to the Italian fashion house Dolce and Gabbana and is designing stores for them worldwide.

detailing or style that recommended it to the jury. The scheme questioned the current cemetery's disposition with nature, that is, with the surrounding water and the sky. The proposal rested on the idea that the islands interior failed to live up to the distant, romantic view from across the lagoon. In an interview Chipperfield compares the view of the cemetery and its high walls to the secret gardens that lie behind dilapidated palazzo walls in Venice; those "concealed paradises".⁵¹ In contrast to these areas the landscaping on San Michele is rather mundane and it was the desire to address this, to create a real garden for the city, that inspired the Chipperfield design.

Another notable aspect of the design was the arrangement of the tombs themselves. Adopting similar architectural forms, the tombs are linked by a bridge and their configuration is designed to ensure that they relate both physically and visually. Most importantly perhaps, they combine to create a contiguous settlement that is an interpretation of the urban pattern of *calle*, *campo* and *cortile* that is so specific to Venice.

Thus, by imitating the space between buildings, rather than the language of the architecture itself, a skilful interpretation of the essential urban qualities of Venice is captured at San Michele. This design does not rely on historical parody or pastiche, instead it is a place that relates to the city but at the same time, stands distinctly apart.

As was the case with the schemes produced by De Carlo, Zucchi and Stirling, Chipperfield has managed to evoke Venice in his design without being a slave to traditional Venetian typologies. The major obstacles for architects in Venice have

⁵¹ See M. Irving, 'The Venetian Way of Death', *Blueprint*, no. 187 (2001), p52.

been the tendency to think of what is modern and traditional in formal terms. Modern architecture implies the rejection of historical models and an abstract purity of form, while traditional implies historical and vernacular forms. Tradition and modernity are seen as opposing concepts and, as many of the examples of buildings outlined in this chapter illustrate, architects designing for Venice have struggled to find an architectural language that offers a compromise between the two. This group of designs suggest that new architecture in the historic centre can avoid being derivative while still remaining sensitive to the surrounding fabric. Admitting modern architecture does not necessarily mean forgetting the past.

In the post-modern age Contextualism has become the key to architectural practices, and here Venice could have an important role. The current climate could provide Venice with more apposite structures than those that have been omitted in the past. The work of many modern architects illustrates how tradition and modernity can be harmonized in the same architecture and how innovative ways of incorporating contemporary design into an historic environment can be found. Sir Norman Foster is one such architect. Foster's work, his early designs especially, illustrate his interest in exploring the relationship between modern design and traditional types. He insists that his use of new technology is no different in spirit from what innovating architects have always done throughout history and his explicit, and oft repeated, references to historical exemplars also show that he is as ready to learn from past models as he is to build for the future. In his 1987 design for Century Tower, Tokyo, (Plate 37) for example, Foster produced what Japanese architects themselves had so far failed to produce: a convincing translation of Japanese aesthetic traditions to a modern tall building. His Willis Faber and Dumas building in Ipswich (Plate 38) also shows how

Foster looks to incorporate contemporary design into an historical setting. Here, Foster fuses two completely different, or even opposed, sets of architectural approaches; a thoroughly modern glass frontage has a curved perimeter, bending in picturesque deference to the existing pattern of the town and reflecting its varied images. The extension to the Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence (Plates 39 – 40), offers a more radical and innovative solution to the contentious issue of the relationship between modern architecture and an historic environment. Foster's building is characterised by its vertical development; essentially it is a station situated thirty metres below ground. The new 45,000 square metre subterranean terminal will connect with the already existing Santa Maria Novella station via a new tramline.⁵² It will have a large glass roof which will be supported by steel structures and at ground level it will be low enough so as not to interfere with the Florence skyline.

Along with Foster, there is a growing repertoire of sensitive works of advanced technology by other young British architects, Michael Hopkins and Yan Kaplicky being two examples. It is Renzo Piano's work however, that is perhaps most widely recognised for the integration of advanced technologies into historical settings.

At Kansai International airport (Plate 41), Piano's design shows how the most modern of buildings can be made to harmonise with nature in a way generally thought contradictory to Modernist principles and technologies. The cross-section of the terminal structure can be read as if it has literally been shaped by natural forces as it follows the dynamic of the airflow from the air side of the building. The picture of the gable end of the central terminal shows how the main roof configuration was

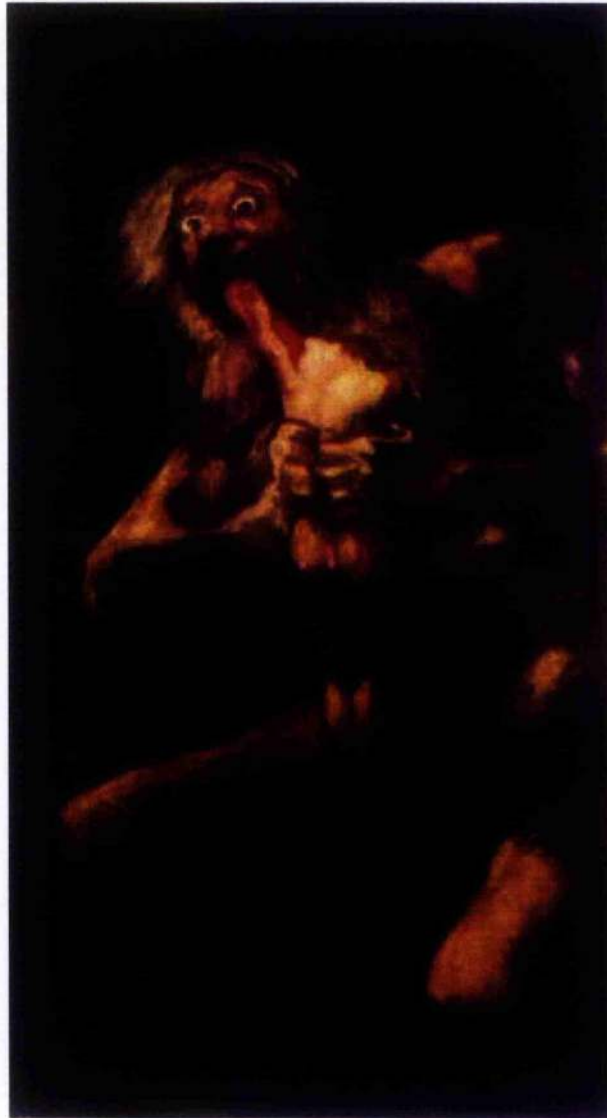
⁵² Work on the new station is said to start early 2007 and the completion date is 2010.

shaped to direct the natural airflows. Writing of the Kansai project, the Piano team claim that their building achieves; "the best that is possible at the end of this century, a mature and totally new balance between technology and nature, machine and man, the future and tradition."⁵³

It is precisely this type of philosophy that could provide Venice with an architectural language and identity for the future.

⁵³ From Peter Buchanan, *Renzo Piano Building Workshop: Complete Works, Vol 4* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), p27.

Chapter Three.



“Never has our heritage been threatened in the same way it is being threatened now. I believe we will soon understand by the moves of this government whether the state, like Crono, will continue to devour its own children or if it will realise that by doing so, it will murder itself.”

Salvatore Settis.

La Repubblica, 19/10/02

The other 90%

The future viability of the architectural fabric in Venice is dependent on the continued integration of new architecture into the *centro storico*, but also on the appropriate protection and conservation of what already exists. After decades of paralysis and general inertia, the present administration in Venice has embarked on a vigorous campaign for the regeneration and renewal of the ancient urban fabric.

In an attempt to address the declining population and general decay of the built environment the Government has instigated policies of restoration, seeking to modernize vernacular architecture so as to encourage Venetians to stay on the island and foreign investors to buy property in the city. The restoration techniques employed by the state, however, involve aggressive interventions on the architectural heritage, displaying a tendency to renew rather than preserve. While the majority in Venice have welcomed the recent activity following years of neglect, the policies and procedures that have been adopted are only altering and eradicating the distinctive qualities and character of Venetian vernacular architecture. Rather than protecting and preserving the architectural heritage of Venice, it might be charged that the state is in fact destroying it.

The common perception held by the International community is that the greatest threat to Venice is posed by its waters. Since the *acqua alta* of 4 November 1966, the international community have donated millions of dollars in the plight to 'save

Venice'. In a city inured to walls permeated with salt and water, and to intonaco plaster detached from facades, the high water did not cause enormous structural destruction, except to edifices already seriously damaged and to external claddings already in a bad state of repair. The flood did, however, once more bring to notice problems that should have been tackled earlier, in particular the failure to maintain the city's buildings in a good state of repair as constantly as possible. After 4 November 1966, in effect, every single building in the city was in need of immediate cleaning and repair, before the water, salt and fuel oil ruined walls and surfaces. Although the flooding sparked a new sense of urgency with regards to the preservation of historic Venice, ironically, it has done much to damage the urban fabric. In many cases, interference has been infinitely more destructive than neglect and this study will claim that the greatest threat to Venice is no longer posed by the tides, but rather, by its own government.¹

While the entire Historic Centre of Venice is a scheduled monument, only buildings belonging to the state are subject to legal protection and are under the control of the Soprintendenza for Architecture and the Environment. This makes up only about 1.500 in the entire Commune of Venice. The other 90 per cent is considered 'minor' architecture and there is little or no control over the quality of the work that is carried out on these buildings. The Soprintendenza, a state-run organisation, is responsible for checking planning applications for restoration projects and the subsequent execution of the works, whether carried out by public bodies or private individuals.

¹ Details of conservation laws in Venice referred to in this study can, in the majority, be found in Comune di Venezia. (Settore Coordinamento Legge Speciale) (1998): *Interventi per la salvaguardia di Venezia e la sua laguna*. G. Pertot also outlines many of the major laws in his recent book *Venice: Extraordinary Maintenance*. However, it should be noted that my research was largely dependent on the help I received from the Venetian architect Leo Schubert and Toto Bergamo Rossi from the Soprintendenza in Venice. I have, however, directed the reader to sources where possible.

However, because the majority of structures are categorized as minor architecture and unlisted, they have little power to intervene. Gaining the authorization permit for renovation is simple and the final inspection effected by the office, which releases the funds, is, by its nature, exclusively technical and administrative.

The Soprintendenza in Venice often work alongside international funding bodies, such as Venice in Peril, to produce models for sensitive interventions on historic buildings, but these are mere gestures that are largely ignored by the government. Essentially, the Soprintendenza is an aid to conservation but as a body it does not have the leverage to influence decisions on those day to day interventions which form the majority of building work being carried out on the city's built fabric – on the other 90%.

Venice, like other historic Italian cities, is subject to a law that makes the city's administration responsible for confronting the most serious problems facing the city.² The policies and procedures that the state has adopted to address the maintenance of the physical fabric, however, have been highly questionable. The problem is that the laws that govern the conservation of buildings in Italy have essentially remained unchanged in over sixty years even though concepts of what constitutes architectural heritage and ethics of conservation practice have changed substantially.³ The system of management for conservation in Italy has also proved for the most part

² This Special Law (no. 798) dates from 1984, but it has been updated on a number of occasions. For more details see The Council of Europe, *A Threatened Cultural Heritage*. Published by Unesco. 1990.

³ The law concerning the protection of the built heritage and landscape was passed by the Fascist government in 1939. It was known as the law for the 'Protection of objects of artistic and historical interest' and consisted of eight chapters and seventy-three articles, and is still in force except for several articles of Chapter VIII. For further details see The Comune di Venezia, (Settore Coordinamento Legge Speciale) (1998): *Interventi per la salvaguardia di Venezia e la sua laguna*. The definition of 'things of artistic and historic interest' was modified in December 1999.

bureaucratic, and essentially ineffective because of inconsistent policies. This is largely due to the 1972 act where the power to legislate on urban planning matters was transferred to the regional administrative authority (*Regioni*). Although it accelerated the entire system for the approval of new plans, as it was no longer necessary to go through the Ministry of Public Work in Rome, it gradually resulted in each region adopting and employing their own distinct set of regulations. Variation and disparities in planning laws are now apparent in the policies and procedures adopted throughout the country.⁴

Indeed, it is clear that while the Italian Constitution upholds the legislative autonomy of these authorities, the level of protection offered by any particular Region to its own heritage is dependent upon the cultural and economic conditions of the Region. The less developed regions offer a lower level of protection and allow a larger number of illegal works, regardless of protected or listed status.⁵ Adopting a unified approach to conservation management and implementing consistent policies would make it more difficult for regulations to be breached.

Planning laws in Venice were rarely enforced before 1975. In 1942 controls had been made the responsibility of the City Council's Building Commission (*Commissione edilizia comunale*), which had little knowledge of, and appreciation for, the cultural and historic nature of the architectural fabric of the city. This made it possible for the Hotel-Grunwald to extend its neo-Gothic palace in the 1940's, with a new addition on

⁴ See Pertot, Venezia 'restaurata', *Centosettanta anni di restauro sugli edifici veneziani*. (Milan, 1988).

⁵ See P. Marconi, *Il restauro architettonico in Italia. Mentalità, ideologie, pratiche*. In F. Dal Co *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento* (Milan: Electa, 1997).

Campo San Moise that altered completely the character of the square.⁶ The Palazzetto Foscari on the Grand Canal was also needlessly demolished. The so-called 'listed' buildings of the time could be 'emptied' behind their façade and rebuilt, since only the exteriors were protected. As well as this, Venice had failed to honour obligations under the 'Town Planning Law' (no.1150). In May 1954 an interministerial decree called on the Commune of Venice to accept responsibility for the drafting of the measures outlined in Law no.1150, but to no avail.⁷ One may date this moment to a typically Venetian situation that prevails to this day - non-fulfilment of obligations, the failure to programme or plan and, consequently, to act. This *immobilismo*, however inadequate it may be, might be read as a kind of resistance to external intervention. The evasion of the laws of central government could be seen as romantic and irresponsible nostalgia for the prerogatives of a city that was once mistress of its own destiny. When the law for Local Development Plan (*Piani Particolareggiati*) finally came into effect in 1975, the Venice Council was obliged to adhere to national planning and building regulations, but this only applied to buildings that were listed, therefore the law related to only 10% of the total building stock in the historic centre. The majority of the built environment remains subject to the kind of treatment used in restoration since 1942, except harsh restoration procedures are carried out on the exterior as well as interior (plate 42).

In 1992 the City Council of Venice changed the system of approval for proposed interventions and the criteria which established the degree of protection. They

⁶ This was at the same time as Lloyd Wright's and Le Corbusier's designs for the city were rejected by the Venice Council, on the grounds that they did not preserve the original character of the site.

⁷ Details can be found in P. Gazzola, 'Venezia in Pericolo', in *Per la salvezza dei beni culturali in Italia*, Vol. II (Rome, 1967), pp 605-9.

authorized a planning instrument that provided them with the legislation to classify all the buildings in the city on the basis of typological references. The new criteria was based on an historical-typological form (*scheda*), whereby each building was classified according to its age and the (presumed) degree of conservation of the original character. It was on this basis that the degree of strength of legal protection was to be established: the older the structure, the greater the level of protection. It is this theoretical basis that is one of the weakest parts of the entire system: in a study that attempts to cover the entire city, the *schede* are very frequently inaccurate or even incorrect in the way they define the building complexes. The whole concept of typological restoration is highly questionable for many reasons, chiefly because it is based on an anti-historical perspective and gives special privileges to the earliest periods whilst discounting the impact of succeeding generations. It consequently poses serious conservation problems, especially in Venice where residential complexes are organised in a particularly dense and co-ordinated manner and have been subject to such alteration over the past centuries that any attempt to alter them would result in the significant loss of historic material.

The most advanced theories on architectural conservation state that it is necessary to maintain the material integrity of a given asset and respect subsequent layers which represent the course of time.⁸ Although Italy acknowledged this in 1999 with particular amendments to the chapter 'Definition of Restoration' (Article 43), essentially the general principles of the 1992 plan, insofar as it relates to conservation intervention, remain unchanged.

⁸ See Price, *et al.* *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996).

The Venetian House.

While the public administration in Venice have finally responded to calls for the safeguarding of the city and its revitalisation, the size and scope of the enterprise means a risk for the health of the built patrimony, and nowhere is this more evident than in the fate of the ordinary Venetian house. There is an essential incongruity between the provision of adequate housing and conserving the historical fabric and this is a dilemma that the current government have yet to address or attempt to resolve.

The 1971 'Law for Homes' (no.865) advocated 'typological restoration'. According to this theory the plan and volume of a given building had to be retained, but very little attention, if any, was given to materials such as plaster, bricks, beams and tiles. This was revised in 1999 (no.490), and the original materials and features of a listed house are now retained wherever possible. However, the number of listed properties that constitute domestic architecture is exceptionally low. As already stated, only 10 per cent of the total urban fabric in Venice is listed and the majority of this is made up of public buildings or buildings of significant cultural or historical interest. There are thus, two very distinct types of action; one is concerned with the monumental heritage and limited to a small, privileged group of buildings, which are restored using the most advanced techniques with a high level of control. The other, the general heritage, the connective fabric of the city, is managed by a completely different set of standards. This is dominated more by criteria applicable to modern, new buildings than to old. Even though the simplest dwelling in Venice is rich in material testimony

of its history and the history of the city, the Government does not acknowledge this in the types of work they carry out on these buildings.

The restoration techniques of the state have involved the systematic destruction of plasterwork, the loss of parts of ground floor walls and the unjustifiable replacement of roof timbers and tiles. There is no value attached to the physical components of the original Venetian house. The modernisation of vernacular architecture in Venice has involved 'restoring' a house beyond all recognition of the former dwelling (plate 43), and even demolishing the original Venetian house to make way for a more modern structure.⁹ Other modernisation techniques, such as the insertion of skylights, which involves the destruction of the original roof tiles, and the re-plastering of the façade using concrete rendering, is commonplace. Interventions by the state are carried out using techniques intended for new construction and subsequently materials are replaced rather than conserved. The public funds intended to conserve the historic built heritage of Venice are often expended on its destruction. An indication of how much of the historic fabric of the city is being destroyed can be gained by outlining the amount of rubble from building sites emptied into the public dumps of San Mattia in Murano. In 1988 the total quantity of waste unloaded was 71,815 cubic metres. Ten years later the amount had risen to 103,898 cubic metres, an increase of 31%.¹⁰ This is before we take into account the fact that rubble from the most extensive developments has been dumped on the mainland. Plate 42 shows workmen employed by the state loading rubble from the interior of the house into a boat below.

⁹ The Sant'Anna house in the Arsenale might be used as an example here. The project was carried out by the Ministry of Venice and has involved the destruction of the original 16th Century convent and military hospital, for a new structure designed by the architect Ugo Camerino. See plate 44.

¹⁰ Figures from Venice in Peril. From an interview with Frances Lady Clark, January 2005.

Much of the residential works that is being carried out in Venice, funded by Law no. 789/1984, is designed to bring back into use degraded properties, including the recovery of *Comune*-owned property that have been under-utilized.¹¹ The objective is, according to the state, to arrest and reverse the population exodus. They also, however, actively promote the property to foreign buyers¹². The problem is that even though the government claim to be actively addressing the dilemma of the depleting population, Venetians are effectively being priced out of the market by the foreign investor. Figures published by Venice in Peril in 2003 show that only 61.7% of the total housing stock is occupied by residents, 29.3% is associated with non-resident use, and the remaining 9% is unoccupied. Demand for the 61.7% has increased property values by as much as eight times and the weekly rental of a house in Venice is five times the national average.

The foreign investor places pressure on the government to provide homes that combine the novelty of historic Venice with the convenience of modern-day living. This usually implies a typically 'Venetian' exterior and a comfortably modern interior. The Venetian architect Leo Schubert argues that the Venetian is less demanding on the historic fabric because they are less idealistic about island living.¹³ They are more aware of, and more likely to tolerate, the type of problems associated with living in an historic environment; and in Venice this equates to problems with damp, a lack of natural light, and the restrictive size of a property. The state has responded with the extension of the properties vertically and adding skylights and additional windows (plate 44 & 45). It might be suggested then that the Governments

¹¹ Under the Law the funds allocated were approximately £69.6 million, with 84% committed and 60% spent. Source: Venice in Peril – see www.veniceinperil.org

¹² This can be seen in the number of properties for sale in the Historic Centre of Venice advertised in American and British newspapers etc. Source: www.travelandleisure.com

¹³ From an interview with the writer, September 2004.

policies display the tendency to modernise rather than to conserve because they are dictated by the needs of the foreign investor, rather than the needs of the Venetian community. This is supported by the failure of the state to address other issues affecting the Venetian community, such as the maintenance of school buildings and council-owned properties. The clear majority of government subsidies in the city are assigned to projects that benefit the tourist and encourage foreign investment in the city and their restoration policies and procedures with regards to domestic architecture is clearly governed by market considerations.

An illustration of the typical restoration techniques employed by the state is offered in plates 46 – 48. These images show a 16th Century original Venetian house which was converted into apartments in the early 1920's. The house is located just off Campo San Giovanni e Paolo in Castello.

Plate 46 illustrates the Government's attempt to combat the problem of rising damp and subsidence by the rebuilding of the bottom floor of the building. This is an extremely complicated process, involving the entire structure being supported on stilts while it is completed. It is also enormously expensive and it risks deep structural damage to the entire structure. While it may reinforce the building, the effects are counter-productive as the structure becomes static and it does not allow for the natural movement of the island. The damage sustained by the inflexibility of a structure is long-term. Plate 47 shows the interior and communal hallway of the apartment block. The original tiles and mosaic flooring have been removed and substituted with cement render and machine-squared polished tiles. The original steel handrail has also been

replaced with a modern equivalent. The traditional character of the interior has been completely disregarded and destroyed.

The interior courtyard, a typical adjunct to the Venetian house since the 12th Century, has also been inappropriately and unnecessarily altered. Plate 48 shows the lift-shaft that has been fitted to the exterior of the building. The structure is three storeys high, the standard height of a traditional Venetian house, and does not necessitate an elevator; people have, after all, lived in Venice for centuries without the aid of a lift. The provision of the elevator is part of a Government initiative provide the elderly and infirm with adequate housing. Rather than destroying the character of the entire building however, it would be more logical to restore the ground floor apartments, and supply the necessary fittings and adjustments, such as handrails and ramps, and stipulate that these were specifically for people within this category.

The destructive nature of state restoration procedures in Venice is not confined to the material they remove from the Venetian house, but also what they choose to replace it with. Modern materials have proved to provide cheap substitutes but using materials with different properties for the same function has had serious consequences. Apart from altering the authentic appearance of vernacular architecture in Venice, modern substitutes do not account for the special nature of the original design of a Venetian house. The original builders in Venice allowed for subsidence in three areas of their design. They created a special type of flooring known as *Terrazzo*, which, unlike concrete, had a natural elasticity allowing for some natural movement.¹⁴ They used special double hinges that worked in a way to lift the door as it opened and used larch,

¹⁴ The terrazzo was made of a mixture of pebbles, chips of polychrome marble or glass and crushed brick, all set in a paste of lime.

or the more economical fir, for the doors, allowing it to warp into the shape of the frame. State builders have torn the doors out of the buildings and discarded the hinges. They now use plywood in the doors of the apartment and the wooden floors are replaced with solid ones of concrete. Marble and coloured tiles are used in place of fired brick and terrazzo. In some cases perspex is used as a cheap substitute to glass. Toxic plastic paints incompatible with traditional materials are used instead of less durable but more reliable lime-based distempers. On the façade, cement render is used in place of the traditional lime-based render because it is substantially cheaper. Cement is also often used in place of the traditional Istrian stone, applied from ground level up to approximately six feet, in an effort to combat the effects of damp. It is widely acknowledged that lime-stone render is a more effective deterrent against the effects of damp, but it is also significantly more expensive. It has also been proven that cement render actually encourages damp rather than prevent it because it does not allow the structure to 'breathe'.

The restoration techniques endorsed by the state use material substitutes that not only falsify the appearance of the original Venetian house, but threaten the delicate balance that was achieved in the original design of these buildings.

These structures are further threatened by the extensive excavation work the government carries out on the canals. Research carried out and documented by the Venetian engineer Mario Pavanini suggests that continual dredging of the canal dries it up and this creates stresses on the buildings exterior and interior, with a consequent slipping of the base of the walls, and the disruption of the equilibrium of the

building.¹⁵ Recently, the effectiveness of the Government's so-called *soft measures*, that is, raising the *fondamente* and dredging the canals, have been called into question (plates 49 - 50). It has been argued that this is unnecessary and that more long-term strategies for the prevention of the excess silt and high waters should be investigated.¹⁶

The fate of Venice's vernacular architecture, whether protected or not, depends on many factors, not least among them an improved knowledge of what exists. This could be achieved by the creation of an inventory of domestic buildings. Such a tool would provide an open archive which could be consulted by both architectural professionals and the wider public. In contrast to churches, which already enjoy protected status and are, for the most, richly documented, almost all of the houses and many of the palaces in Venice are little known or researched. Much of the work of collecting data has already been carried out by various bodies and individuals over the years, but the results remain uncollated and unpublished. There also needs to be a more efficient diagnostic parameter that would serve to evaluate when a building might need work. Indeed, at present there is no effective means of checking the true state of a building, because no mechanism obliges or encourages either those directing operations or those carrying them out to provide a survey of the building on which works were to be conducted.

Venice in Peril, the British Fund for the Preservation of Venice, have offered an alternative to the restoration policies of the state in their San Giobbe house in Cannaregio (plate 51). The organisation recognises the need to establish and develop

¹⁵ See M. Pavanini, *Traditional House Construction* (London: Architectural Review, 1971), p297.

¹⁶ See M. Loricrs. 'Aqua Alta', *Techniques et Architecture*, No. 441 (1999).

an ethos of sensitive conservation on 'minor' architecture in Venice. The aim of the San Giobbe project was to set a benchmark for the best practice in projects of this kind and illustrate how conserving as much as possible of the original building in all of its historic phases could be less than the cost entailed in the more radical intervention of the state. Venice in Peril was optimistic that the Government would use the house as a model for future projects. The organisation funded the initial architectural reports and surveys, both of which were compulsory legislation, but they depended on the Venice Council for financial assistance with the subsequent building work. Although the Council originally appeared committed to the project, they have yet to release any funds to Venice in Peril. The house will therefore remain unrestored and in a dilapidated state until Venice in Peril can raise the capital independently.

The International funding bodies in Venice have also been let down by the state in the monitoring and maintenance of their restoration projects. John Millerchip of Venice in Peril told me:

"It is increasingly important that we attach conditions of maintenance with our work, otherwise we cannot provide the building with the best kind of protection. We are interested above all in conserving Venice, rather than restoring it, and conservation depends on regular maintenance."¹⁷

Apart from the major public buildings and those that are listed in Venice, the maintenance of the built environment in Venice is unequivocally poor. This can be seen, for example, in the Sacca Gerolamo housing complex in Cannaregio (plate 52 &

¹⁷ From an interview with the writer, September 2004.

53). This scheme, funded by the Commune di Venezia, was completed in 1990 and has yet to be subject to any general repairs or maintenance.

Frequent repairs to a structure are more cost-effective than one major renovation project, and the antiquated nature of much of the building fabric in the city means that the structure is disturbed every time major work is undertaken. Interventions can cause such trauma to a building that it can damage the entire structure. The Government have, as of yet, failed to implement any long-term maintenance schemes, which would aid in the plight to preserve the historic fabric. Indeed, in all of the work that the state executes on the 'minor' architecture, there is little to suggest they have considered the impact or long-term implications of the alterations they impose. The present administration, although in many ways considerably more active and dynamic than those that preceded it, appears interested above all in leaving a sign, a highly visible mark, of itself. Their predominant emphasis is therefore on the new and they are more likely to commit financially to the development of the outermost margins of the city and the construction of new housing there, than schemes that restore and revitalize the original urban fabric.

Thus, the present administration are irreversibly altering the historic fabric and causing long-term damage that will cost more to restore in the future. Prior to the introduction of the 1999 law (no.490), this was evident in the techniques they adopted to restore many of the public buildings in Venice. In most, if not all, of their restoration projects prior to the 1990's the state ignored all of the building principles of the original builders. The earliest builders in Venice had a sophisticated understanding of their materials and developed their construction techniques in

response to the geophysical problems of the lagoon environment and the delicate nature of the land on which they built. Many of the International funding bodies for Venice admit that much of their time and money is expended on rectifying restoration works that had previously been carried out by the state. This can be seen, for example, in Venice in Peril's recent project on the cemetery island; the Cappella Emiliani (plate 54). The building has been subject to rising damp and continual wash by tides and has therefore undergone substantial restoration work over the years. In the 1840's restorers added iron rods to the cupola to help support the structure, but over the course of time these rods have rusted and subsequently dislodged the brick and stonework. Venice in Peril hired a special team of engineers and architects to remove the rods and rebuild the cupola according to the methods of its original construction.

In the 1970's cement had been used to resurface the floor, in spite of the fact that cement does not allow the building to breathe, vital of course in the damp conditions so typical of Venice. The Venice in Peril Fund paid for the relaying of the traditional marble floor. The cost of the entire project was in excess of £250,000, much of which went towards rectifying previous restoration work.

Although churches and public buildings are now protected by stringent planning regulations, ensuring that the techniques used previously in the Cappella Emiliani are now redundant, the law is not applicable to the majority of the urban fabric. Therefore, it is almost certain that in the future, when the other 90% is finally given the protection it warrants, we will be facing the same scenario but on an inordinate scale. Consideration also needs to be given to educational schemes. Sufficient training of craftsmen such as stonemasons, woodworkers and blacksmiths is a

necessary investment for the future conservation of the historic fabric of Venice. As of yet, the Government has failed to implement any educational programmes of this kind.¹⁸

The irresponsibility of the state with regards to the safeguarding of the heritage can also be seen in their disregard for the preservation of the paving of the Venetian street. Most paving in Venice consists of old stones called *Masegni*, which are dressed pieces of trachyte from the Euganean Hills. They are laid on a bed of sand and in rows of the same breadth, with the straight joints in line with the principal route or direction of traffic. The surfaces of the *Masegni* were sloped to ensure that puddles would not form. Today the way in which they are laid has changed: the joints are much wider, with gaps of several centimetres, and filled with cement render. The surfaces of the *Masegni* were once sloped to ensure that puddles would not form, but this has unfortunately been forgotten. Of greatest concern however, is the fact that many *masegni* disappear during the course of work.¹⁹ Residents made a recent emergency appeal to the City Council, claiming the loss of 11,000 *masegni*, but it is certain that the total is in fact much higher. When the *fondamente* are raised the paving is torn up and then replaced, but many of the stones that go back into the walkways are new, not the originals that were removed. This is done in spite of the fact that the laws that provide the money for the work in Venice specify that the original ancient material is reused. The Venice Council claim that many of the stones are lost in the course of work, and point to the fact that much of the disruption is caused by necessary works to services below the pavements (gas, water,

¹⁸ Venice in Peril set up the ICCROM programme in 2001. The Commune has lent its name to the project, but their input has been minimal. This is currently the only major educational scheme of its kind in the city.

¹⁹ Plates 55 - 56 shows how *Insula* have wrapped the *masegni* that have survived in protective film, presumably to be re-laid once the work has been completed.

telecommunications etc), and a lack of co-ordination between the various utilities means that frequently the same tract of pavement is lifted two or three times in succession. Their argument is that this would inevitably lead to many of the *masegni* being damaged and they are hence irreplaceable. Much of the destruction is almost certainly caused by incorrect specifications and carelessness in execution, demanded by speed. A survey of existing conditions and strategies to direct the progress of this work needs to be carried out before the work is undertaken and supervision of this sort might improve the quality of the work.

There are those that offer more cynical theories as to the disappearance of the stones. The American journalist John Kcahey investigates claims in his book *Venice Against the Sea*,²⁰ that contractors working for Insula Spa²¹ sell off the original paving stones to individuals who install them in private palazzos and gardens. While some in Venice, including Frances Lady Clarke, President of Venice in Peril, believe that this is nothing more than mere sensationalism by the International Press and wholly inaccurate, there *are* some Venetians who question whether the city's treasures are being properly restored and whether Insula returns the originals once restoration is complete.²² They argue that fountains and bridge-work have been removed unnecessarily, and when they are returned they are mere copies. Insula have responded to these claims stating that when the iron-work is returned it looks different because of the cleaning process it under-goes. The rust is removed from the metal and the object is then cleaned and varnished, giving it a slightly different and fresh

²⁰ Thomas Dunne Books, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2002).

²¹ Insula Spa is the company that handles the urban maintenance of Venice. See www.insula.it

²² Frances Lady Clarke expressed her opinion on this matter in an interview with the writer, January 2005. Full details of the scandal, including Insula's reaction, can be found at www.insula.it.

appearance. There is, they claim, nothing whatsoever underhand in the work they carry out in the city.

Whether or not there is some truth in the Venetians case against Insula, there is little doubt that the destruction, or loss, of the *Masegni* is, like the rest of the procedures adopted on the 'minor' architecture in the city, due to the lack of necessary controls over the quality of the work carried out on the urban fabric in Venice.

The fundamental problem is with the laws that govern restoration policy and procedure in Italy. More specifically, with regards to Venice, the laws are ineffective in two particular areas. The first is the failure of the legislation to include the concept of the protection of a historical centre as a whole. The 1939 law placed under its protection; sites of special importance, villas, gardens and parks, environments composed of immovable objects with special characteristics and sites with panoramic views.²³ In 1967 Giovanni Astengo criticised the inadequacy of the 1939 act, pointing to the fact that in the course of thirty years only a very few 'immovable objects' had been added to the list and it had proved useless for the protection of 'complexes of immovable things' which he defines as historical urban centres.²⁴ Although a law had been passed in 1942, designed to control the urban development of built-up areas and to ensure that the traditional character of an urban centre was respected, the law requested a plan that would outline "buildings destined for demolition or reconstruction and those due to undergo restoration"²⁵ This demonstrates that the law did not include the concept of protecting the historical centre as a whole. If this was defined it would encourage the entire *centro storico* to

²³ This is an abbreviated version of the list. Please see www.icomos.org for a more details.

²⁴ See P. Gazzola (1967).

²⁵ P Gazzola, p.607.

be perceived as a protected monument and *all* buildings could therefore be automatically granted listed status.

The second area where the laws are especially inadequate are with regards to legal controls over work carried out on the historic fabric and regulations governing the quality of this work. Although in principle highly positive, the interventions on the canals and foundations are also problematic, since they are carried out using highly destructive procedures. The same is true of the technical operations that have devastated the ancient pavements and removed much historic material from below the level of the ground. The point is that there is no legal way to stop this kind of intervention. With regards to work on the 'minor' architecture of Venice, there is no law in place that protects the ancient material from which the building is made. Although the 1972 *Charter for Restoration*, produced by the Ministry of Education, ensured that the ancient material of a structure was to be retained wherever possible, this only applied to buildings belonging to the state or under the control of the Soprintendenza. Because ninety percent of the buildings in Venice are not under the protection of *any* of the laws designed to preserve the architectural fabric of the city, there is *no* legal way of safeguarding them.

The 1982 law (no.512)²⁶ on 'Taxation on properties of high cultural interest' has proved to be the most important in terms of promoting the survival of the historic fabric. This is undoubtedly one of the most significant laws introduced by any administration in Italy since 1939. The law granted important fiscal benefits on income derived from the use of cultural properties. The objective of the law was to

²⁶ See Comune di Venezia, (Settore Coordinamento Legge Speciale) (1998): *Interventi per la salvaguardia di Venezia e la sua laguna*.

involve the private owner in the preservation and maintenance of the building or cultural asset. The concept was designed to encourage the private owner to co-operate with state conservation works. There are various types of concessions, but essentially the whole cost of maintenance and restoration of listed properties were made tax deductible. Moreover, inheritance taxes were significantly reduced or in some cases, waived. The impact the introduction of this law has had on the preservation of the built environment should not be underestimated. It has established a new attitude with regards to the listing of buildings and subsequently, requests to have ones property listed have significantly increased. Whereas it was hitherto regarded as a burden, resulting in heavier controls over the management of the property, listing and its consequent restrictions are now considered advantageous and an asset to a property. If sensitive restoration is legally restricted to listed buildings, then clearly the greater the number listed, the more effectively the historic fabric is protected.

At the end of the 20th century Italy signed two important European Conventions; the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985) (the *Granada Convention*) and the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) (1992) (the *Malta Convention*). The Granada Convention, the most relevant with regards to Italy's responsibility to Venice, stated that:

"The contracting parties to the Granada Convention have undertaken to make statutory measures to protect the architectural heritage which would satisfy certain minimum conditions laid down in the convention. These include the maintenance of

inventories, the adoption of integrated conservation policies.....and the promotion of training in the various occupations and craft trades involved in the conservation of the architectural heritage.”²⁷

Despite the fact that both conventions are only considered guiding principles for the preservation of the heritage within each country and not specifically mentioned in national policy, in signing the convention Italy agreed to these terms. However, they have so far neglected to act on a number of principles outlined in the treaty. The first is with regards to education and training in disciplines related to conservation. According to the Franceschini Committee²⁸ the maintenance of the built environment makes up over fifty per cent of the total building activity. One would expect then that restoration practice would be a prominent feature of architectural studies at Italian Universities. It is not so however. In Italy the architect is the only profession qualified in the restoration of a listed building, but the architecture faculties have failed to train professionals equal to the difficulties that this entails. In Italian universities only 8% of the total curriculum followed by architectural students is dedicated to the teaching of restoration or conservation topics. Architecture faculties are organised around 5-year courses, with a total of 4,500 hours of teaching, and of these, only 180 hours are dedicated to two courses; Theory and History of Restoration and Architectural Restoration. At the architecture school in Venice only about 18 per cent of the students gain a degree in subjects connected with Restoration and Conservation. The faculties of architecture in universities throughout the country

²⁷ From www.icomos.org. This website provides a useful summary of the Granada Convention, the Malta Convention and The Venice Charter. See also G. Alomar and others, *The Preservation and Development of Ancient Buildings and Historical or Artistic Sites*. Published by The Council Of Europe, (1965).

²⁸ See Comune di Venezia. (Settore Coordinamento Legge Speciale) (1998): *Interventi per la salvaguardia di Venezia e la sua laguna*, p36.

were also found to be not adequately contributing to the growth of scientific studies into the conservation, restoration and analysis of monuments.²⁹ Although a new four-year course was established recently at the Architecture University Institute of Venice; *The History and Conservation of Architectural and Environmental Assets*, it does not allow the possibility of becoming a registered architect according to present laws on the professions. Therefore the impact that this will have on future conservation practice can surely only be minimal. Unless the government can establish effective education programmes and training schemes, as outlined in the terms of the Granada Convention, then the future of the architectural heritage in Italy will continually be put in jeopardy.

Italy has also, to date, failed to comply with the terms of the Granada Convention in relation to the maintenance of inventories. Although there has been since 1964 a catalogue of cultural and environmental assets with information on the nature and state of each asset, a complete inventory of the whole of Italian cultural heritage has yet to be produced. Some ministries have started programmes for the collation of the relevant data, like the cataloguing of the historical centre of Venice in the 1980's, but they have not been able to complete them, and the problem is always a financial one. Budget restrictions frequently do not allow a general survey to be conducted. If Italy is to fulfil its commitment to the Granada Convention then more funds have to be made available in order that this valuable enterprise may be carried out.

Of considerably greater threat to the cultural heritage of Italy are the implications of the announcement by the Italian government, in June 2002, of the creation of a UK-

²⁹ This according to a 1993 study carried out by one of the sub-committees of the Franceschini Committee. See Comune di Venezia. (Settore Coordinamento Legge Speciale) (1998): *Interventi per la salvaguardia di Venezia e la sua laguna*, p37-38.

style “quango” to be known as *Patrimonio S.P.A* (Heritage PLC).³⁰ This entity could, in principle, sell or lease certain cultural or heritage property belonging to the state with at most the signature of the Minister of Culture. Essentially, the state would take charge of all public property including that of public domain and cultural valence, and put it into a gigantic property brochure in the hope of selling it. In response to the controversy sparked by the new plans, the Minister for Culture was pushed to establish, in January 2003, the *Consiglio Scientifico per la Tutela del Patrimonio Artistico* with the objective of drawing up a list of state-owned cultural property and agreeing which of it could not be sold or leased. The census would divide properties into three categories: those of clear cultural interest, which could not be sold; those that fell into a grey area, which could be sold with restrictions linked to future use; and those of no cultural interest, which could be sold. The ministry would determine whether culturally interesting assets should remain under public ownership or be deemed salable. It was the Soprintendenze that were charged with conducting the census but it was clear that they lacked the human and material resources required to complete the colossal task. Once they were assigned a group of buildings to assess, using a checklist of twenty-three criteria, state and regional cultural overseers would have only one hundred and twenty days to provide the required documentation. Under Italian law, failure to meet this deadline for any property would imply that it was of no cultural worth and could be sold off. Thus, there are some that argue that the legislation is essentially ineffective, and intended to be so.

³⁰ Details can be found in S. Settis, *Italia S.p.A - L'Assalto al Patrimonio Culturale* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002).

In October 2002 Salvatore Settis published his book *Italia Spa* with the sub-title *The Assault on Cultural Heritage*.³¹ Settis gives a critique of the country's recent cultural policies and presents them as the ruthless exploitation of Italy's heritage and cultural assets by the Government. In the first chapter, entitled 'The Talibans in Rome', Settis charges the current government with a complete lack of regard for the cultural heritage of Italy. He claims that the policies adopted by the present administration show that they are interested only in profiting from the cultural heritage of Italy and are subsequently not motivated to maintain and conserve it. This is arguably illustrated too in the restoration policies they have adopted in Venice. Their restoration procedures in Venice are clearly dictated by the desires of the foreign investor rather than in the interests of preserving the built environment and the Venetian community.

Although Settis' book condemns the public administration in Italy, he acknowledges the fact that there is nothing concrete to replace it with. Settis underlines the importance of understanding the Italian model before bringing about dramatic changes and advocates high quality training for the public and private operators of the cultural sector. He argues that the state needs to devise public policy structures that provide the right balance between the private and the public sectors for the preservation and promotion (*valorizzazione*) of Italy's cultural heritage. He also proposes that it is necessary to compile a comprehensive inventory of all cultural property owned by the state. This would ensure a greater awareness of the qualities and characteristics of each of the objects or buildings of cultural interest on the list.

³¹ Turin: Einaudi, 2002.

Settis' book caused great controversy in Italy at the time it was published. It did much to damage the reputation of the current government and in particular of the current Minister for Culture Giuliano Urbani. The book was reviewed in the national press and it was widely debated amongst the chief operators of the cultural sector. Some commentators criticized Salvatore Settis for *Italia S.p.A.*'s polemic tones and argued that he was using *Italia S.p.A.* as a vehicle to prepare and launch his candidature to become the Minister for Culture. However, the facts relayed in the book are all accurate and the proposals Settis makes for changes to the administration responsible for dealing with the heritage, as outlined above, are not radical; they are merely in line with the guiding principles set out in the Granada Convention, the Malta Convention and the Venice Charter.

Essentially, Settis book does much to underline the irresponsibility of the present Government in relation to their treatment of Italy's cultural heritage. Although Settis correctly claims that the continued existence of Italy's cultural legacy is dependent on the abolishment of the privatisation policies advocated by the Government, following the guidelines of European Conventions would also assure its survival. A general divergence between the countries that signed the treaties, from a legal and policy point of view, is generally accepted, but essentially they should adopt and display a shared ideology. Belgium signed the Granada and Malta Conventions three years after Italy and an interesting comparison can be made between the historic cities of Bruges and Venice.

Like Venice, Bruges has had to tackle the problem of sustainable conservation and resident housing difficulties, exacerbated by mass tourism. Bruges also has a similar urban structure to Venice; it is a small scale city with a network of canals and has

retained its medieval street-plan. The city's architectural heritage ranges over diverse periods and it has preserved a remarkable amount of its medieval buildings and urban fabric due to its escape from the general devastation of World War II. The authorities in Belgium have found ways to rehabilitate and restore the ancient city of Bruges while at the same time providing social housing. The history of Bruges is a mixture of growth and constant change and in acknowledgement of this the Government produced a plan that would both guarantee the conservation of the essential character but could also direct the changes necessary to be compatible with a modern lifestyle.³² Essentially, the focus was on conserving the historical centre, but doing so without curbing modernisation. The system adopted in Bruges became a model example of town planning policy and was copied and internationally recognised. It might be considered the most appropriate model for the conservation and urban regeneration of Venice.

The Department of Historical Monuments and Urban Renewal was established in Bruges in 1971 in order to guide architectural and building projects and alterations. Since this time an enormous amount of work has been done on renovation, restoration and supervision of the historical centre of the city. In 1972 the Master Plan was drawn up which defined the main issues that the structural plan needed to address. The first issue was that of the provision of adequate housing. The plan promised a vast improvement in the living conditions within the historic centre, and outlined a restoration programme that would rejuvenate the dense urban fabric and revitalise the entire area. All building work would be subject to the strictest architectural criteria and where it was not possible to adequately restore the existing building, new

³² A detailed account of the conservation policies adopted in Bruges can be found in J. Van der Borg, *Tourism Management in Heritage Cities*. Published by Unesco, (2000).

buildings of a high quality were encouraged. A new concept was added to the Master Plan in 1973 entitled 'the section plan'. This consisted of an inventory of all buildings which described, amongst other things, the function of the building, roof type, materials, the condition of the physical building structure and any previous building-work information. Although the section plans were never permanently updated or revised, before construction work is carried out on any building, a report containing this information is required.

The Belgian Government has exercised tight controls over the management of the historic heritage in Bruges. *All* buildings in the historic centre are subject to strict building regulations and permission granted by the City Council is necessary for all alterations to a building. Unlike the restorative procedures adopted by the Venice administration, certain modifications to any building in the historic centre are categorically forbidden. These include the installation of sun-blinds and awnings, the alteration of a buildings function and certain forms of roof renovation which require the removal of the original roof-tiles (red, undulating ceramic roof-tiles are obligatory in the historical inner city). Alterations to the appearance of a façade, including colour changes, are also closely regulated and require permission from the Department of Historical Monuments. The administration in Bruges actively promotes sensitive restoration and the reuse of the original material is required where possible. The state provides historically accurate doors and window frames and old glass for restoration work where the original components of the structure are beyond use. Any work that is carried out on a building within the historic centre is paid for by the city council. Where listed buildings are concerned however, subsidies from a higher authority are made available. Owners of listed buildings (both private and

public) are also eligible for restoration subsidies granted by the Flemish Regional Government.

The Master plan addressed the problem of depopulation and the provision of social housing where Venice has not. The city council in Bruges had striven to maintain the number of council dwellings in the historical inner city. Recognised social building firms have realised no less than eight hundred homes since the early 1970's and a small number owned by the City Council are rented out at average national rates. Additionally the council established the OCMW (Public Commission for Social Welfare) which manage forty-eight housing complexes in the inner city. These are made up of historical residential entities around a courtyard or garden and provide cheap and comfortable accommodation for approximately three hundred pensioners. A similar scheme could easily be adopted in Venice.

Undoubtedly, the Master Plan in Bruges has been an immensely successful heritage conservation scheme. It offers many valuable lessons for historic cities in Europe, but perhaps the issues it addresses are especially pertinent for Venice.

In the plans developed in Bruges from the early 1970's, all have had as their emphasis the restoration and conservation of the ordinary house.³³ Like Venice, the majority of the historic fabric of Bruges is made up of vernacular architecture and traditional dwellings. The plan endorsed the preservation of the traditional elements of the Bruges house, and crucially, included all of the buildings in the historic centre, regardless of their perceived status. The Italian Government should adopt similar policies and acknowledge the value and significance of the simplest dwelling in Venice.

³³ See Van der Borg, (2000).

The city council in Bruges has worked to promote a new sense of awareness for good conservation practice. They have stressed the importance of communication between themselves, architects and the public and have developed a series of educational programmes to assist in the instruction of sensitive intervention techniques on historic buildings. A long-term maintenance plan was also recently drawn up by the administration for the city.³⁴ The schemes introduced by the City Council in Bruges since 1971 have worked towards the creation of sustainable conservation and insuring the future preservation of the historic city in its entirety. It is precisely this that is lacking in the policies adopted by the Venice Council.

This chapter has endeavoured to show how the current legislation regarding the protection of the historic fabric of Venice is essentially ineffective. The policies that determine planning have not addressed at its root the most critical nexus of the city, which is that of conservation; the need to sustain the historic fabric. The present administration does not seem to comprehend that the absolute priority in the city should be the preservation of its historic heritage. Instead, their restoration policies and procedures are determined by the needs of the foreign investor and are therefore directed towards the modernisation of domestic architecture rather its conservation.

The law needs to be altered and extended to take into account more 'minor' vernacular architecture as properties with high cultural significance. New legislation should recognise the entire *centro storico* as an historic monument and the laws pertaining to listed buildings would subsequently apply to the whole of the architectural fabric of Venice.

³⁴ Van der Borg, chapter 3.

There has been little published evidence of the extent of implementation of the provisions contained in the Granada and Malta Conventions or of the commonality of legal and policy provisions adopted by different countries in Europe. This has been acknowledged by the Council of Europe but it is vital that they address it appropriately. A dossier containing an outline of the conservation policies and practices of each country could reveal the inconsistencies and irregularities in the system adopted by Italy. Europe could subsequently be made more aware of the kind of treatment that Venice is receiving from its own government. Although European Conventions only provide a framework and guidelines to conservation practice, they represent a philosophy that should be embodied in every aspect of conservation practice within the given country. Italy should be made accountable for the harsh restoration policies it has adopted, particularly in Venice. The work that is carried out in Venice will continue to be legitimate and lawful until the law is changed, and there is little impetus for Italy to change them. The present Government will not be compelled to change their current policies unless the International Community puts pressure on them to do so.

In 1964 Italy signed the Venice Charter that stated explicitly "all restoration work must be reversible".³⁵ Even if the 90 per cent of architecture in Venice is eventually listed and placed under the protection of conservation laws, it might be too late for much of the architectural fabric. The restoration techniques carried out on domestic architecture by the state advocate stylistic falsehoods that are irreversible. The wealth of historic material found in the traditional Venetian house is pulverised by the state

³⁵ Article 9. See www.icomos.org for details.

on a daily basis and the longer their policies go unchallenged the greater the likelihood that the authentic character of Venice is lost forever.

Conclusion.

The authorities in Venice have long been accused of being in a state of paralysis, of perpetual non-doing. This study has attempted to prove that *non-fare* is no longer the problem, but rather, that too much is being done too inadequately.

Over the last few years the present administration has embarked on a vigorous campaign for the urban renewal and regeneration of Venice. Plans for the notorious Project M.O.S.E, first produced in 1972, were finally passed in 2003 and it was perhaps this that marked the end of decades of general inertia. Subsequent schemes that have been adopted include Calatrava's controversial fourth bridge over the grand canal, the redevelopment of lower Guidecca, and the conversion of celebrated buildings such as the Molino Stucky complex and Punta della Dogana, the 17th century customs house.¹ Although the recent activity of the state is generally perceived as a welcome departure from the paralysis that has hitherto plagued Venice, urban renewal has involved a great deal of destruction, that has so far, gone unchallenged.

For decades the 'question of Venice' has centred on the relationship between the city and its waters. Countless symposiums and conferences have been held and millions of dollars have been donated in the plight to 'save Venice' from its tides. Yet seemingly, the story of "the other 90%" remains untold. Although Venice is continually made subject to the scrutiny of an international audience, the unbelievable

¹ Full details of all of these projects can be found in Appendix three.

truth is that the international community are largely ignorant of the extraordinary maintenance scheme adopted by the current government. The international funding bodies in Venice *are* aware of the type of work that is carried out by the authorities but they have failed to challenge the state in any meaningful way. Italy has continued to accept the financial aid, and the Venice charities have continued to offer it, despite their lack of involvement in how the money is spent. There is an obvious reluctance to confront Italy on its management of Venice and it most likely derives from a number of factors. The first is an inability to offer a comprehensive strategy on how to best tackle the ‘Venice problem’; that is, preserving the historic fabric and at the same time providing adequate housing and building residential communities. The second is their confusion as to the extent of their authority in Venice. Although UNESCO does have certain powers and the right to take emergency action on behalf of the city, Italy has limited the control of all international committees by only placing Venice and its lagoon as a common entry on the World Heritage List. It needs to be included on the World Heritage Endangered List before UNESCO can act without consulting Italy. There is also the complex legal and political intricacies of the situation that are attributable to the system of government in Italy as a whole. Addressing these would be “like opening a can of worms”².

Venice is thus a vastly complex and problematic issue, both for Italy and the international community. While we should not underestimate this fact, there are a number of conclusions we can draw in the close of this study.

² Leo Schubert. From correspondence with the writer dated 4th February 2004.

Firstly, there needs to be a refocusing of international attention away from the issue of the *aqua alte* and efforts made to widen the understanding of the network of problems facing Venice; to move beyond the mere artistic preoccupations, to understand the larger topographical, technical, financial and political issues at stake. Europe needs to accept some responsibility for Venice and act to ensure that a long term plan is implemented that will protect the historic fabric of the city as a whole. Europe also needs to facilitate Italy in its attempt to develop the residential areas within the historic centre and the creation of an international committee could help establish a network of support and counsel. Ultimately however, Italy *must* be made accountable for their current conservation policies in Venice and be made answerable to Europe with regards to the type of conservation procedures they employ.

The system in Venice is heavily bureaucratic and the criteria for approving new builds and developments highly questionable. There is little agreement with regards to the future of the city and this needs to be addressed if a long term development plan and a more objective approach to urban planning can be achieved. Architectural competitions run by the Biennale need to inspire designs for a material Venice rather than an imaginary one. In using the talent that is cultivated at the IUAV (The University of Architecture), Venice could easily become the leading authority on architecture in Europe. The imposition of the past, the physical opportunities for sitting on water, the social challenges and the urgent need for housing all challenge the imagination of the architect. Its unique urban environment also provides the perfect vehicle for experimentation and development in conservation and restoration techniques. There are other opportunities for Venice to establish new roles. Plans are currently being made for Venice to host a convention on marine biology and here

Venice could have an important role, given its unique aquatic setting and environment. More could also be made of Venice's great maritime past and the expertise of the boat-builders and carpenters that still live and work there.

Many earnestly desire a modern Venice, a city that is not merely a museum but has a viable function beyond tourism. The attitude was evident in many of those I have talked to throughout the course of this study, in all its ambiguity and uncertainty. The fact remains however, that its adherents have been less forceful than the proponents of a Venice as a city of the past. There is after-all an undeniable poetry in Venice's demise: it has been prophesised so many times. Nevertheless, there *is* a modern Venice, and its potential needs to be recognised if it is to secure its future as a living breathing city beyond its still-life picture-postcard image. Venice needs to generate her own opportunities, to become the mistress of her own destiny once more, to create a place where a life-time can be lived, not just where a once-in-a-lifetime cruise can dock. Will Venice be permitted to realise her potential? Only time will tell.

Appendix One.

Illustrations.

Plate 1.

Map of Piazzale Roma and surrounding area.

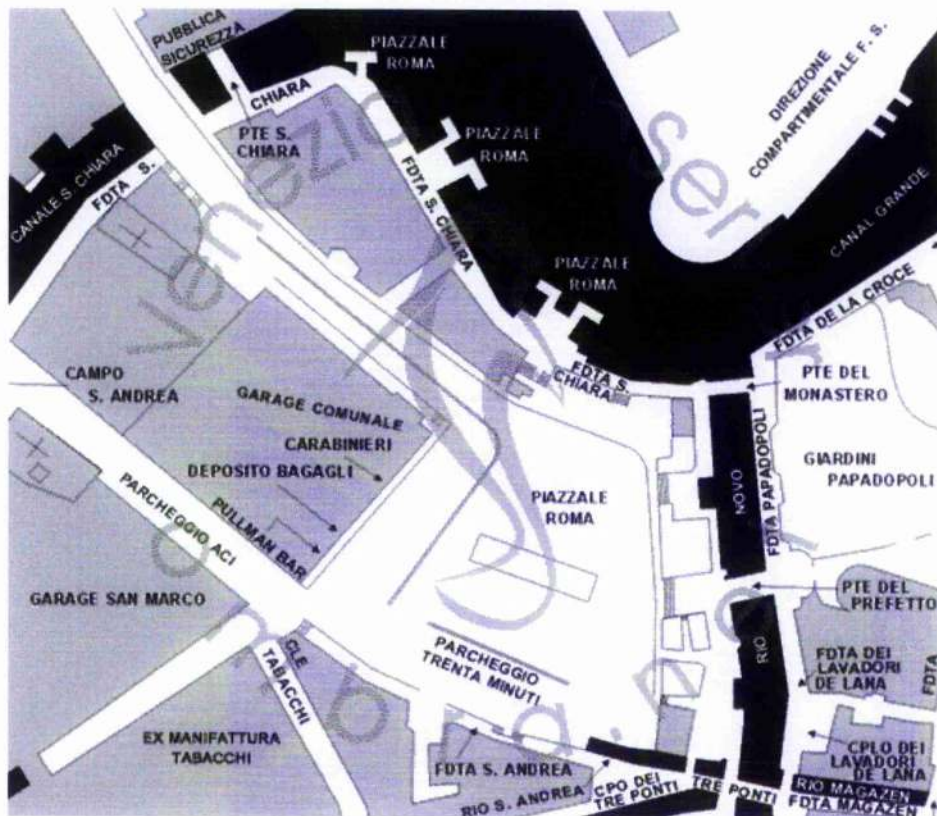


Plate 2.

Piazzale Roma Venice, March 2004.

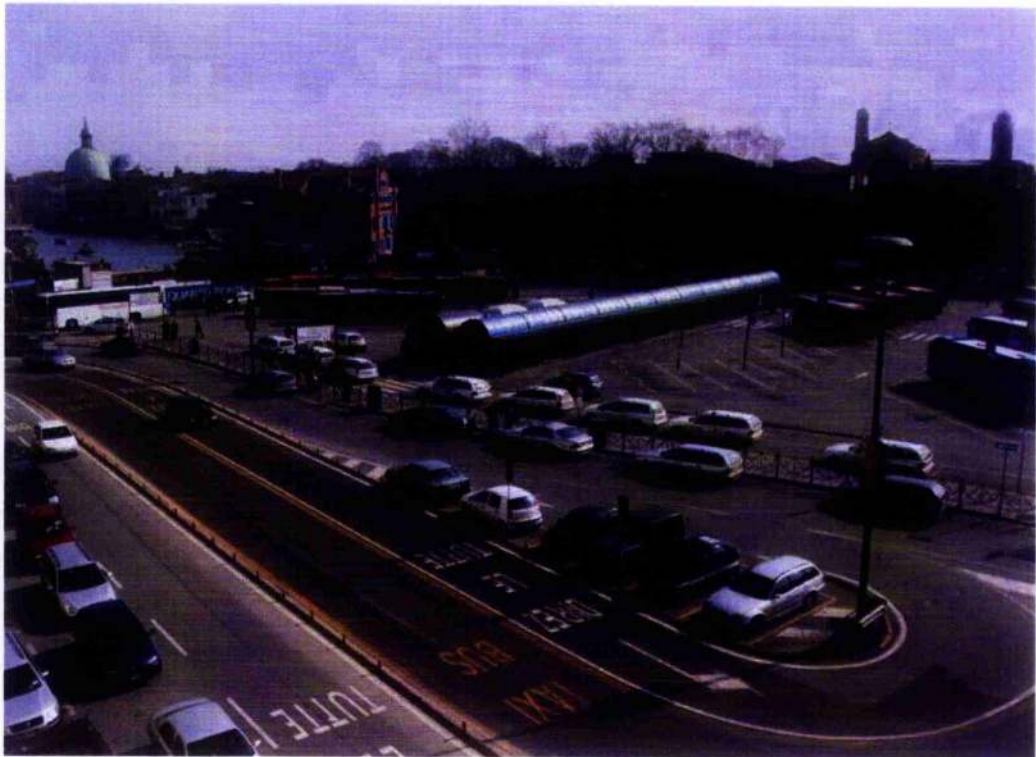


Plate 3.

Santa Lucia railway station, Venice.



Plate 4.

View of Santa Lucia railway station from Fondamenta De La Croce.



Plate 5.

Santa Maria Novella Station, Florence.



Plate 6.

Andrea Martinelli's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

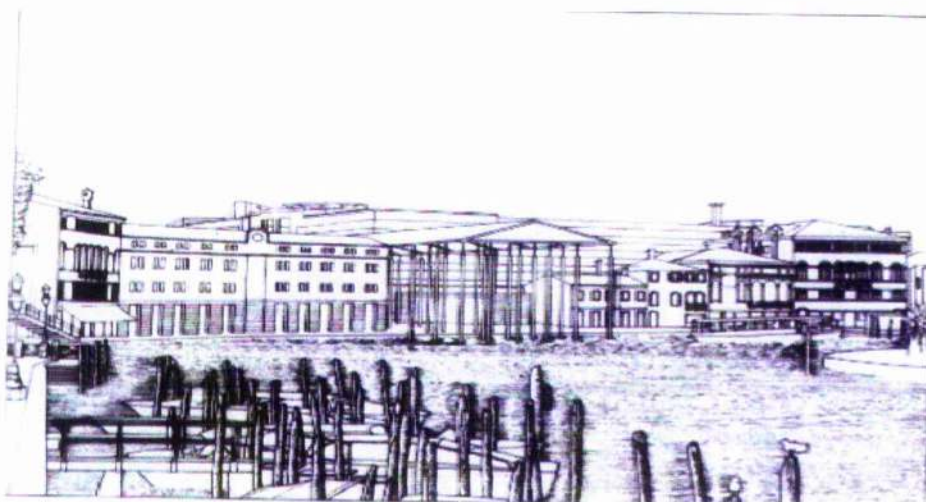


Plate 7.

The Carlo Cuomo Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

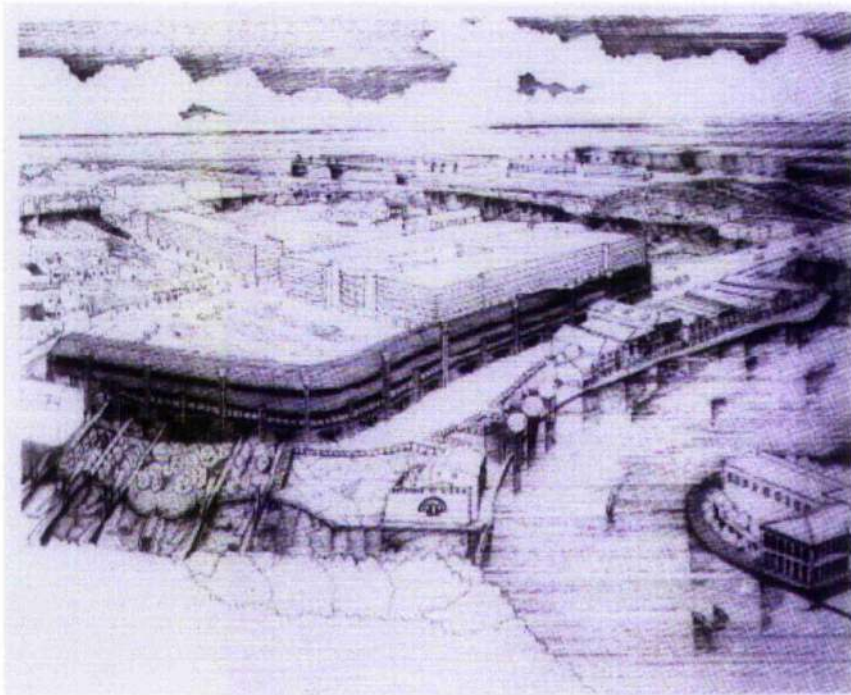
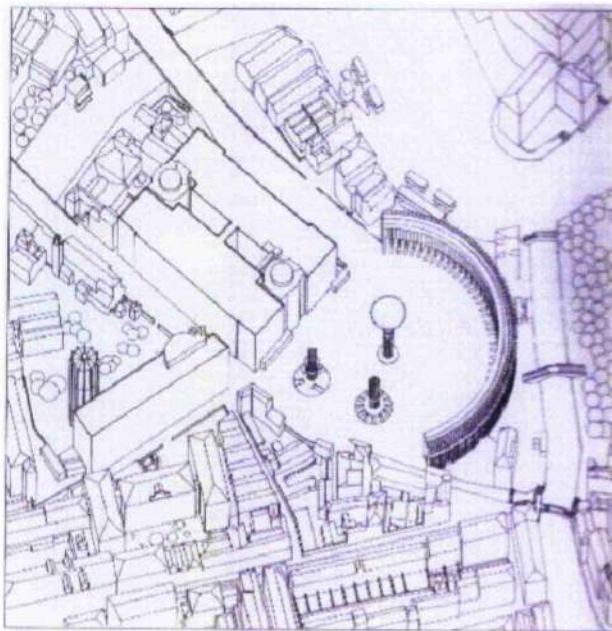


Plate 8.

The Mauro Artibani Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.



Plates 9 & 10.

Augusto Romano Burrelli's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

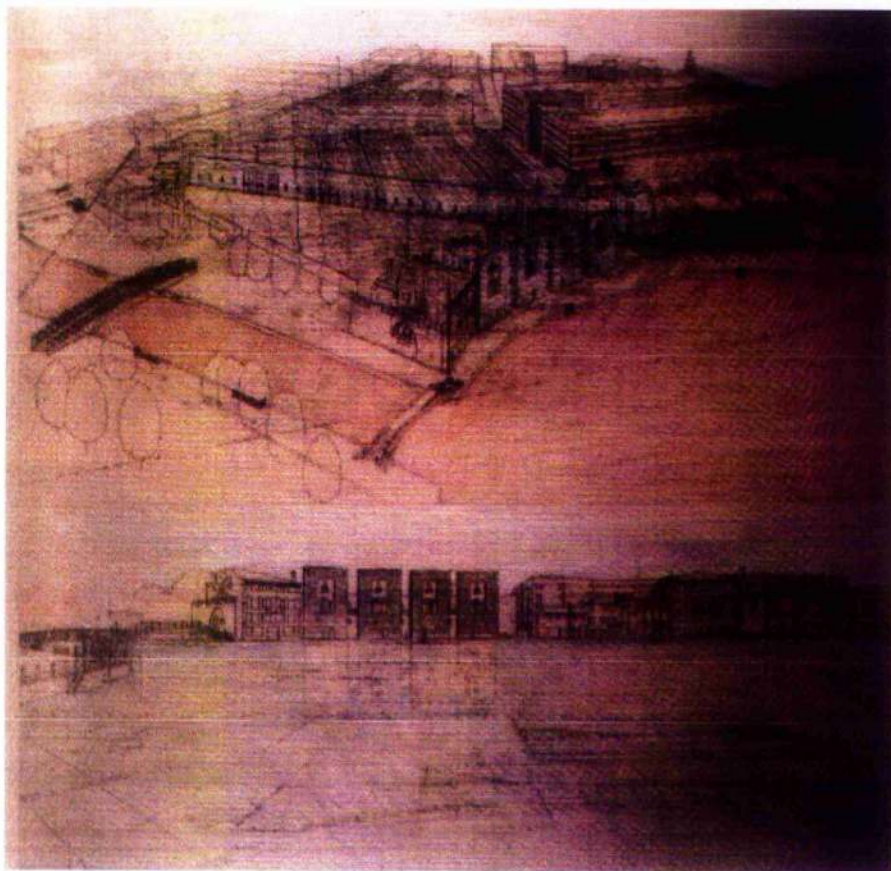


Plate 10.

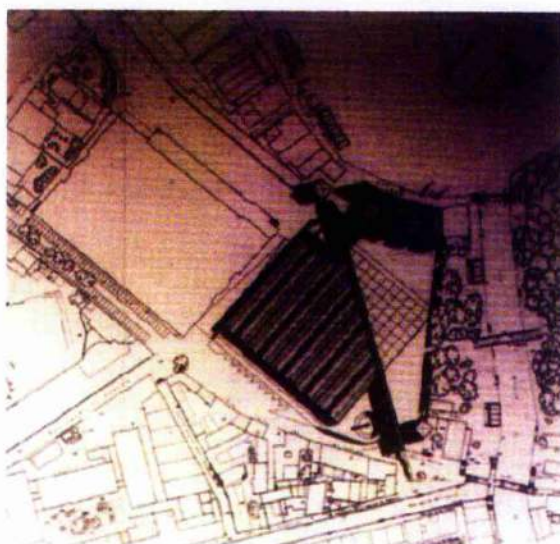


Plate 11.

The Aurelio Cortesi Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991. Number 60.

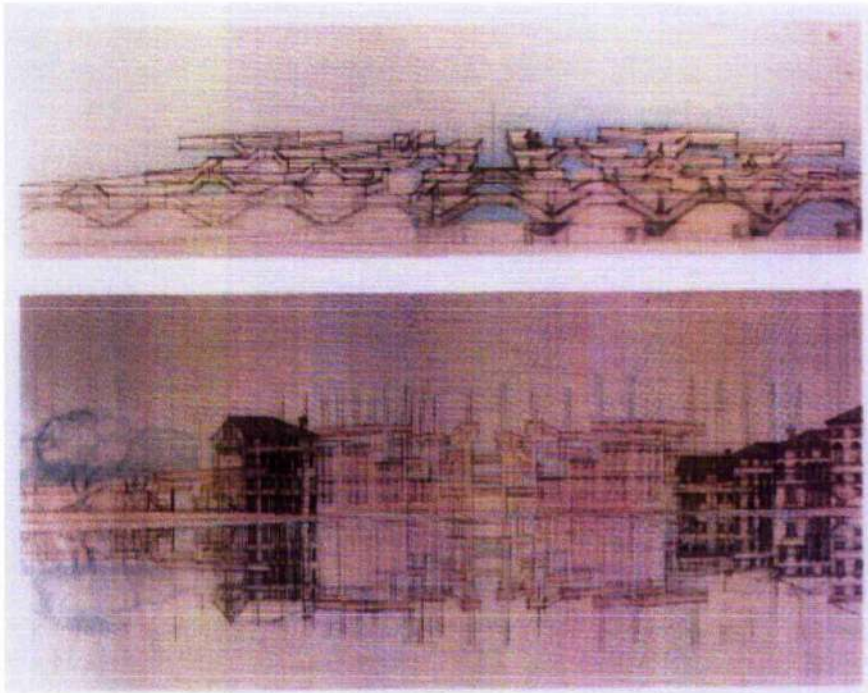


Plate 12.

Tetsuya Kadowaki's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

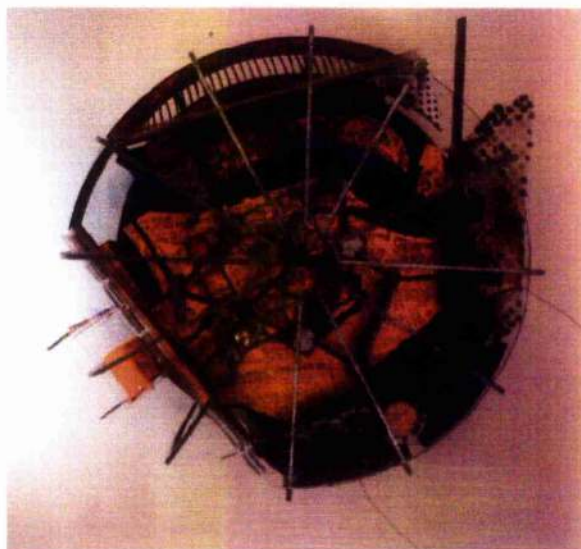


Plate 13.

The Lapayse Luque Group design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.



Plate 14.

Massino Martini's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

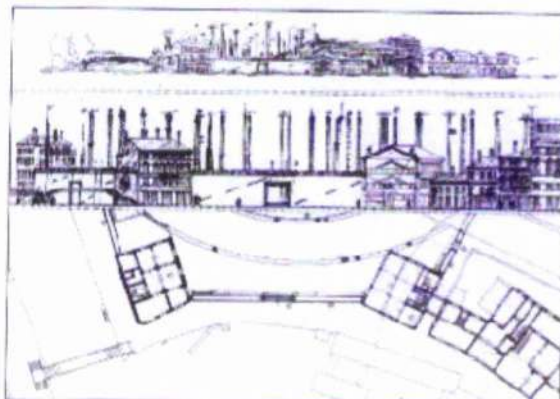
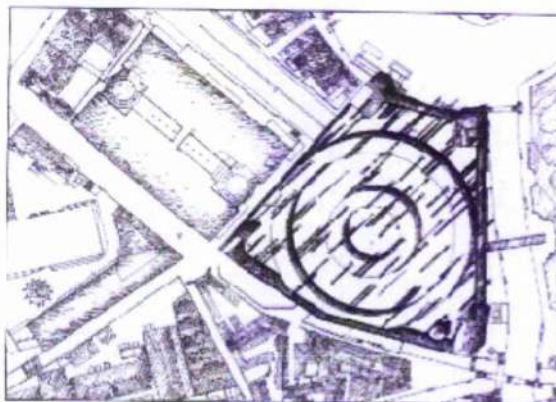
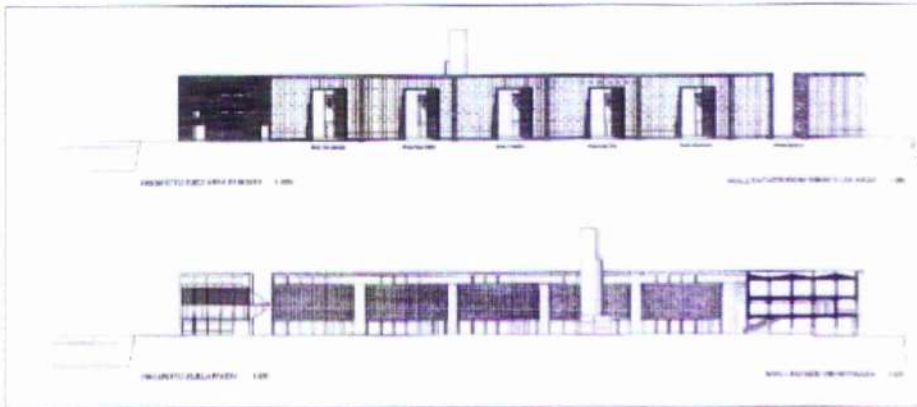


Plate 15.

Jorge Silvetti's design for the Piazzale Roma, 1991.



Plates 16 & 17.

Brunetto De Batte's design for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

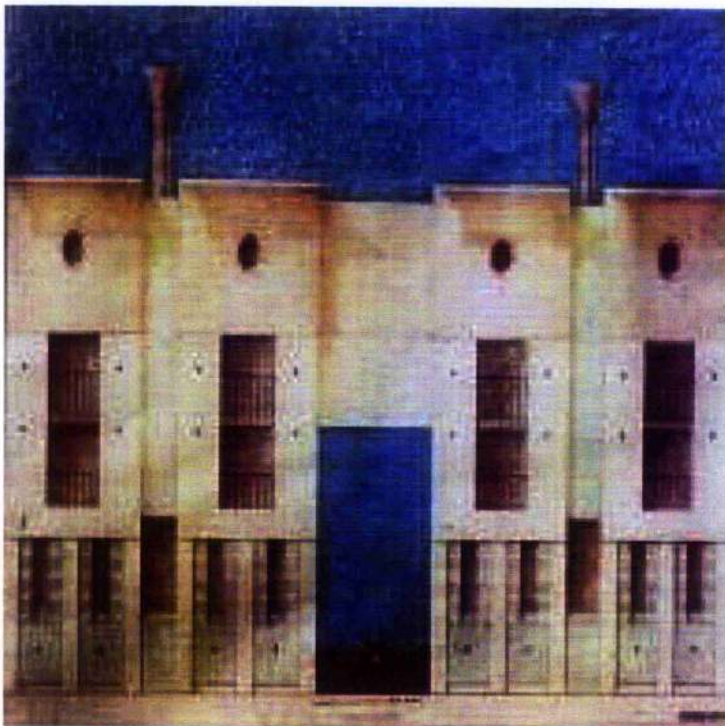


Plate 17.



Plates 18 - 20.

The Dixon Jones proposal for Piazzale Roma, 1991.

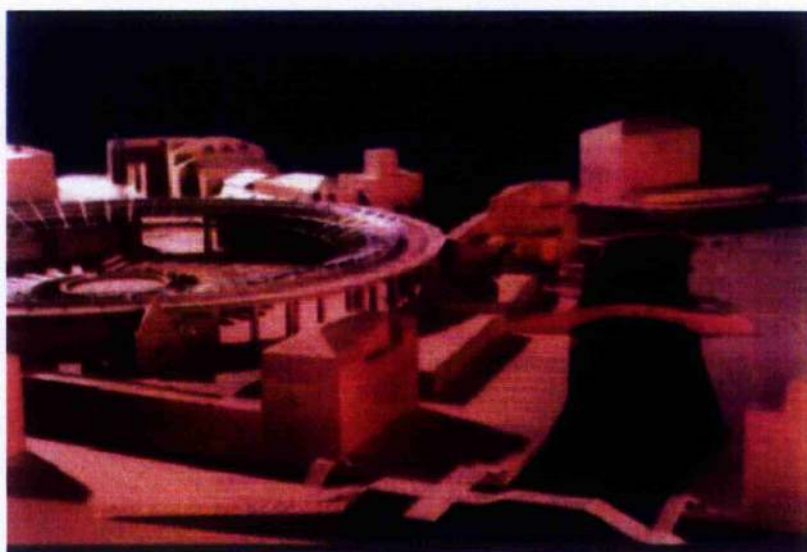


Plate 19.

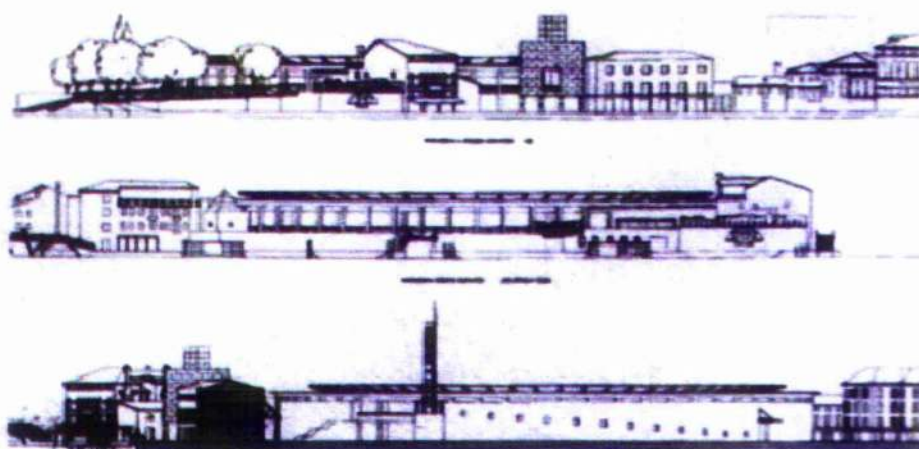


Plate 20.

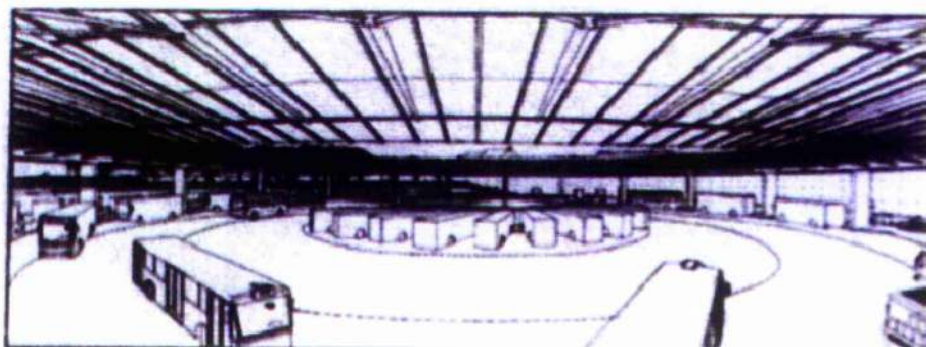


Plate 21.

Frank Lloyd Wright. The Masieri Project. 1953.

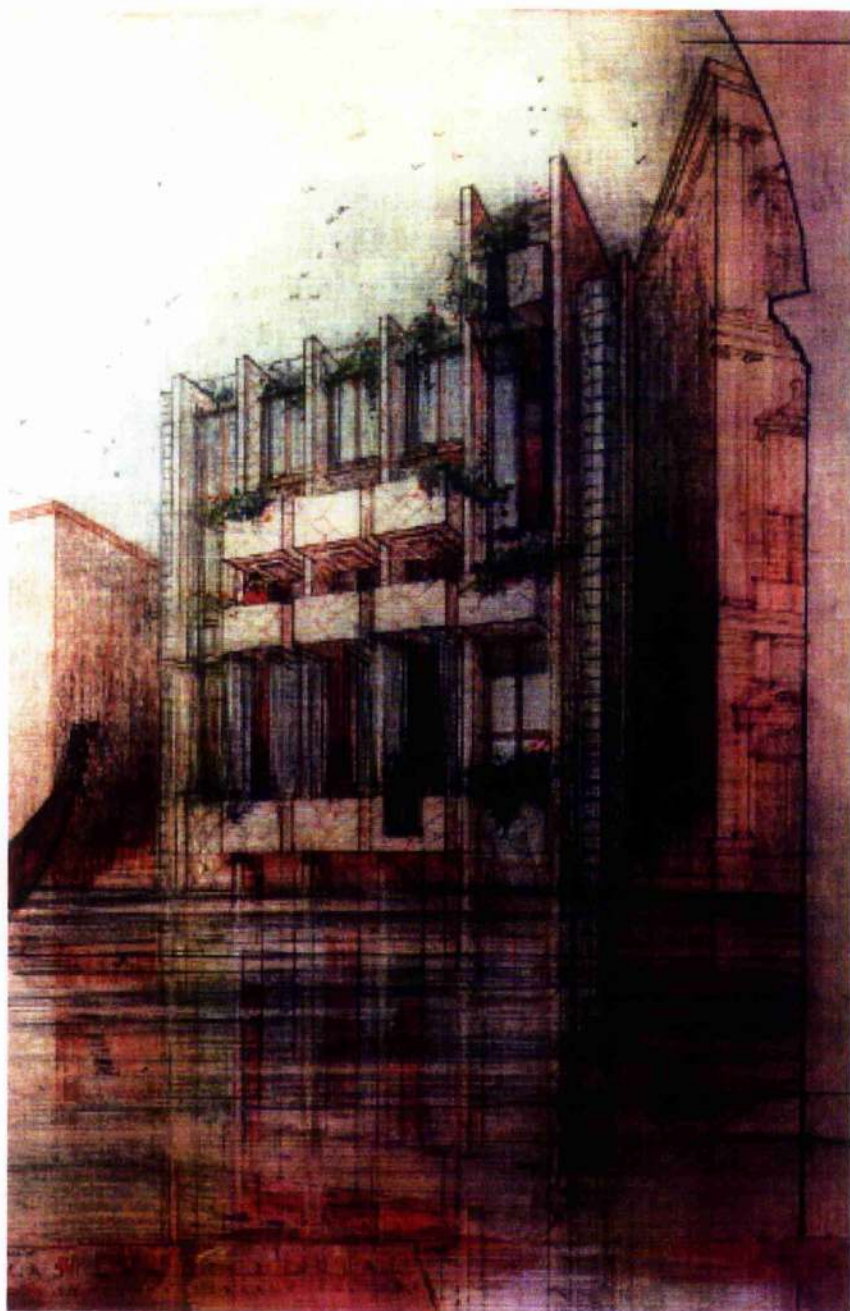


Plate 22.

Louis Kahn. Congressi Centre, Venice. 1968.

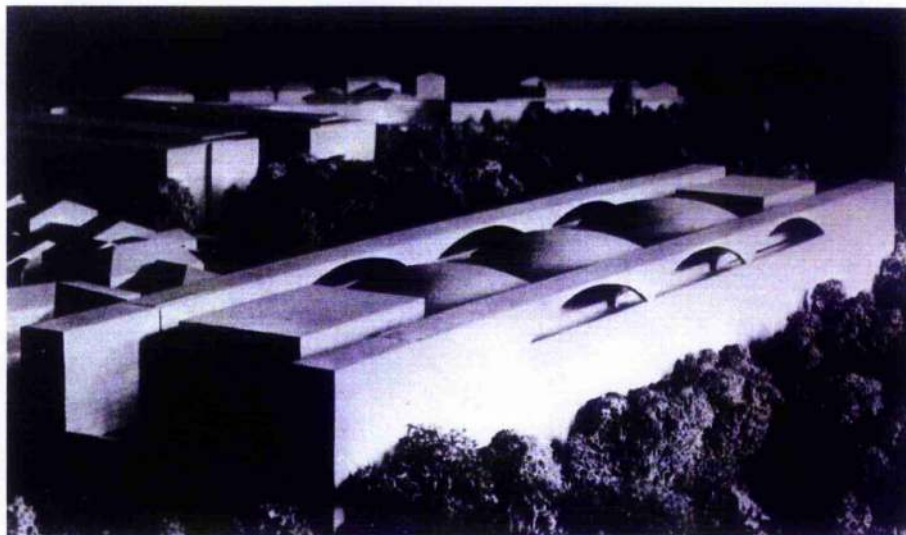


Plate 23 & 24.

Frank O. Gehry. Gateway design. 1998.

Plate 23.



Plate 24.

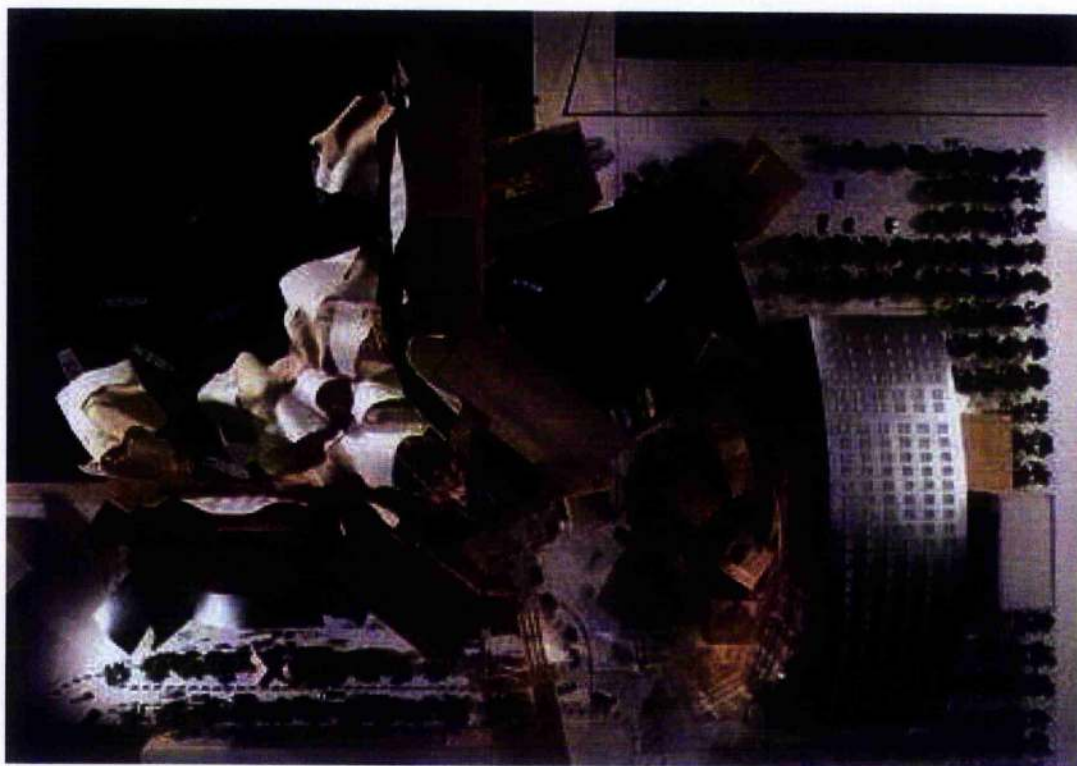


Plate 25.

Frank O. Gehry. Design for New York. 1998.

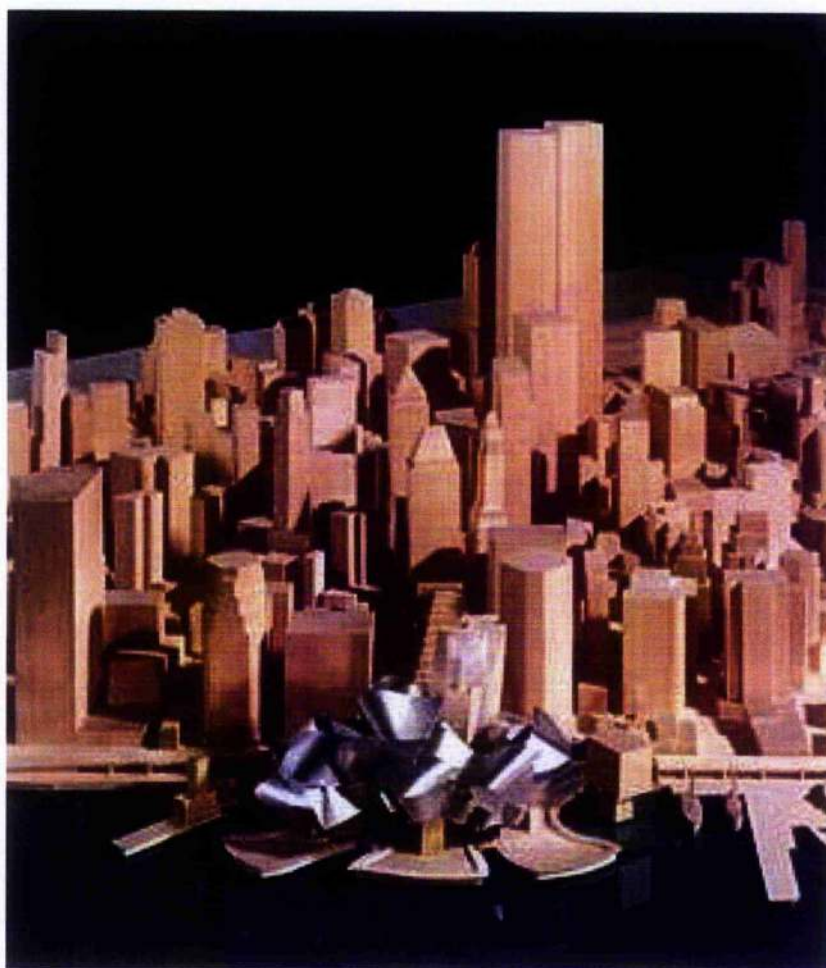


Plate 26.

Hotel Bauer Grunwald, Venice.

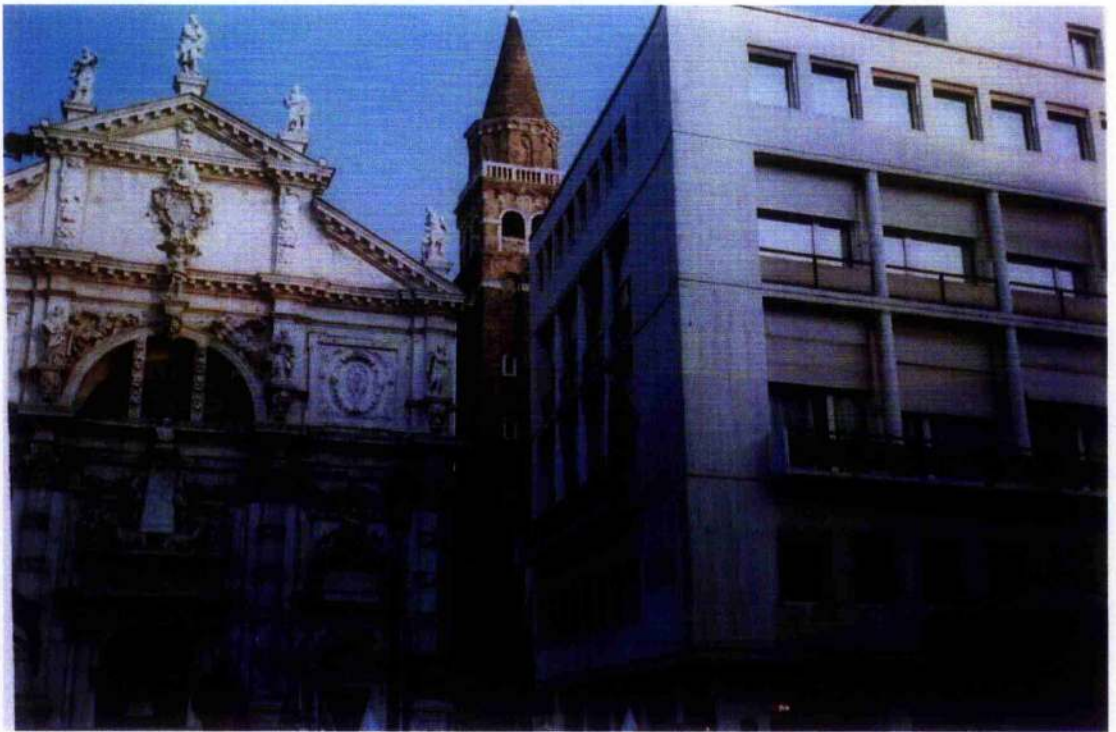


Plate 27.

Venice Fire Station.

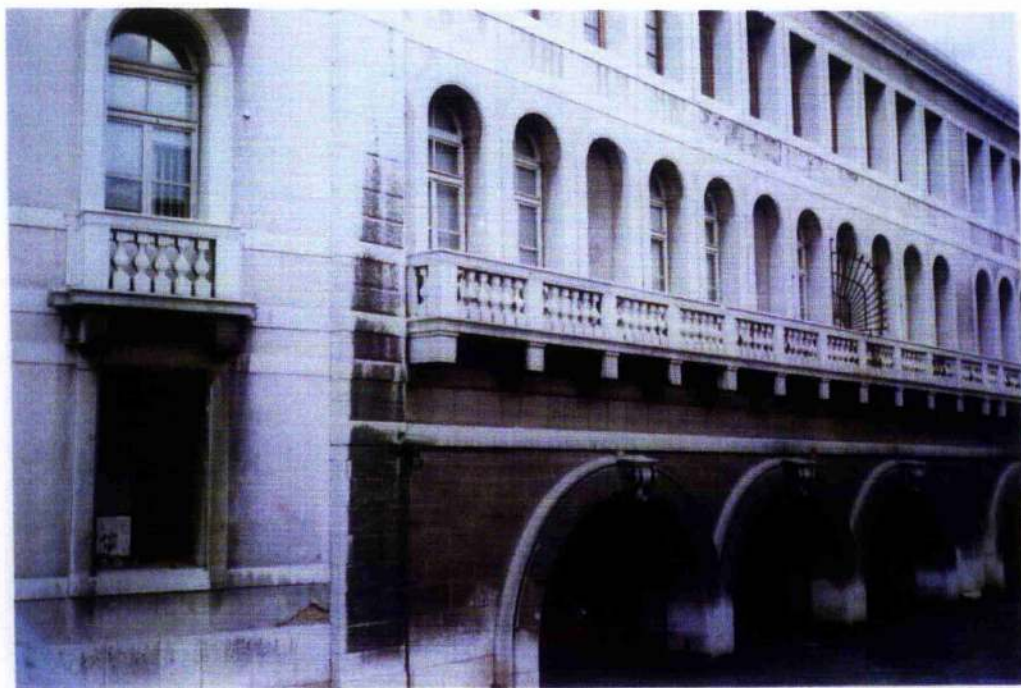


Plate 28.

I.N.A.I.L Building, Venice.



Plate 29.

Ignazio Gardella. House on the Zattere. 1954.



Plate 30.

Vittorio Gregotti. San Giobbe housing scheme. 1984-7.

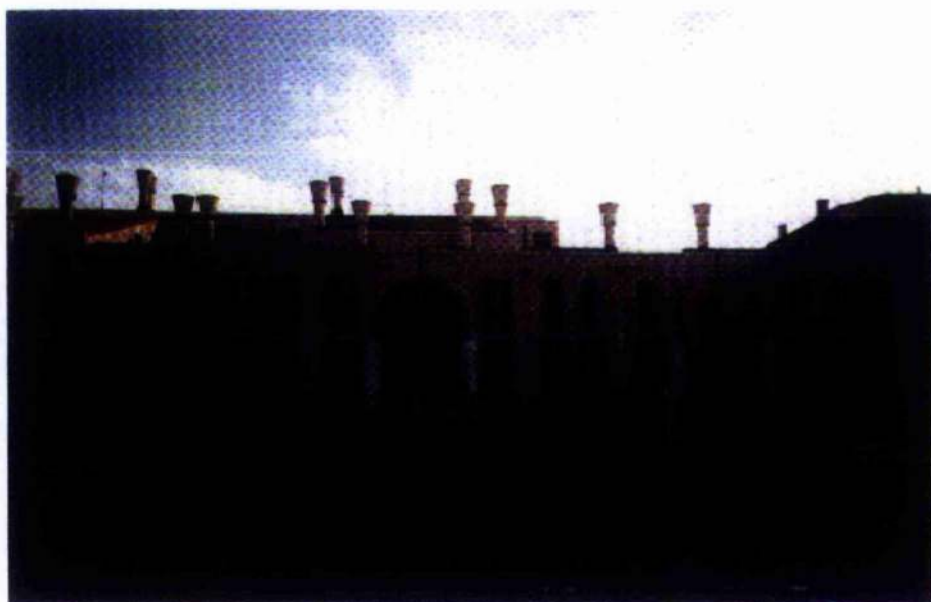


Plate 31.

Gino Valle. ICAP housing complex, Giudecca. 1986.



Plate 32.

Giancarlo de Carlo. Mazzorbo housing scheme. 1979-1986.



Plate 33.

Cino Zucchi. Housing on the Guidecca, 2003.

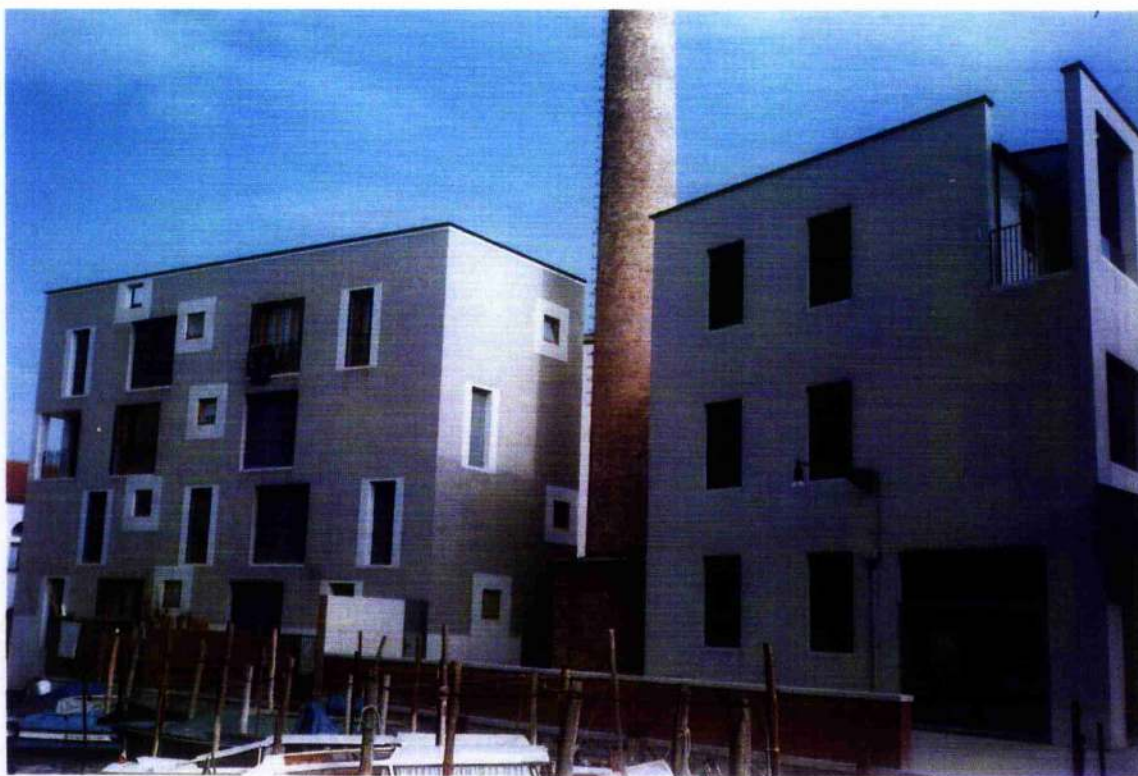


Plate 34.

Venice hospital extension. Luciano Semerani & Gigetta Tamaro. 1980.



Plate 35.

James Stirling. Biennale Bookshop.
1989.



Plate 36.

1998-present.

David Chipperfield. Extension to San Michele cemetery island.

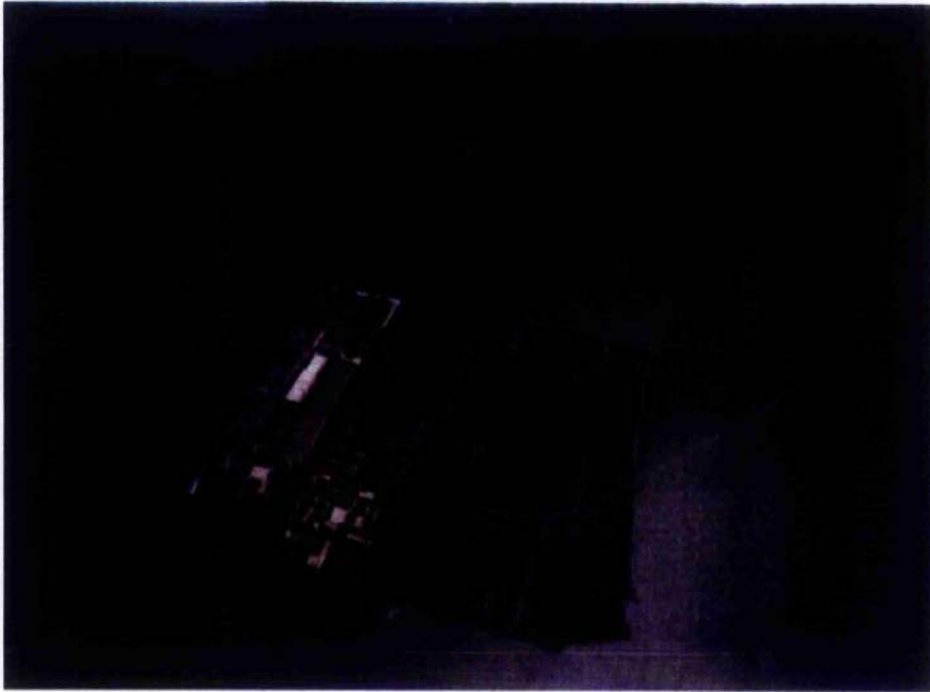


Plate 37.

Norman Foster. Century Tower, Tokyo. 1987.

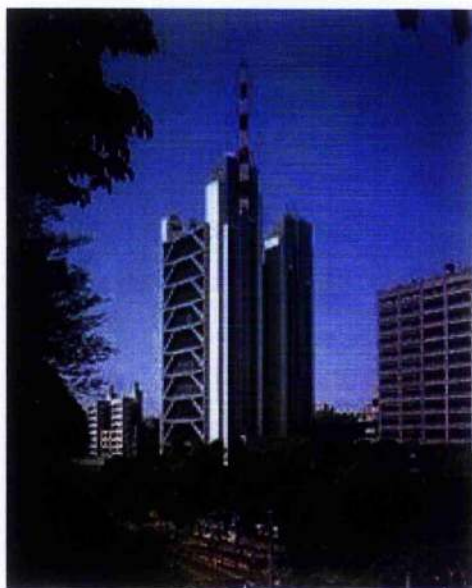


Plate 38.

Norman Foster. Willis, Faber and Dumas Head Office, Ipswich. 1975.



Plate 39 - 40.

Norman Foster. Design for extension to Santa Maria Novella train station, Florence. 2004.

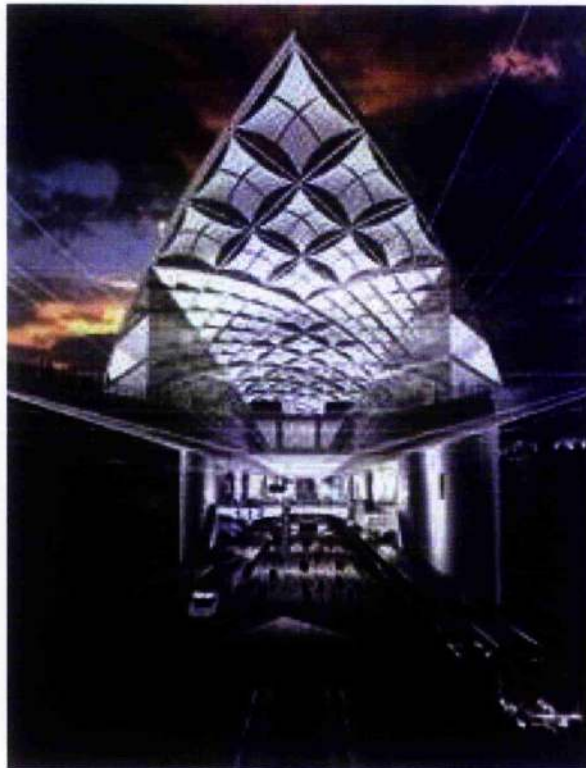


Plate 40.

Interior of extension to Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

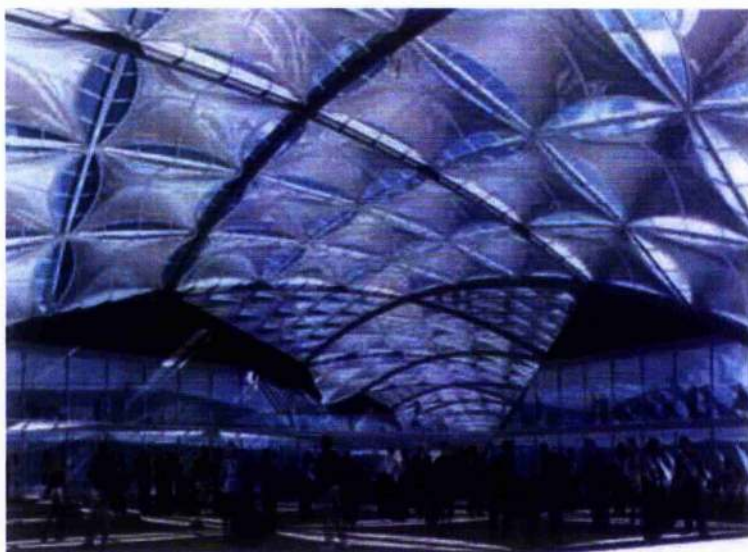


Plate 41.

Renzo Piano. Kansai International Airport Terminal, Osaka. 1988-94.



Plate 42.

Photograph of workmen loading barge.

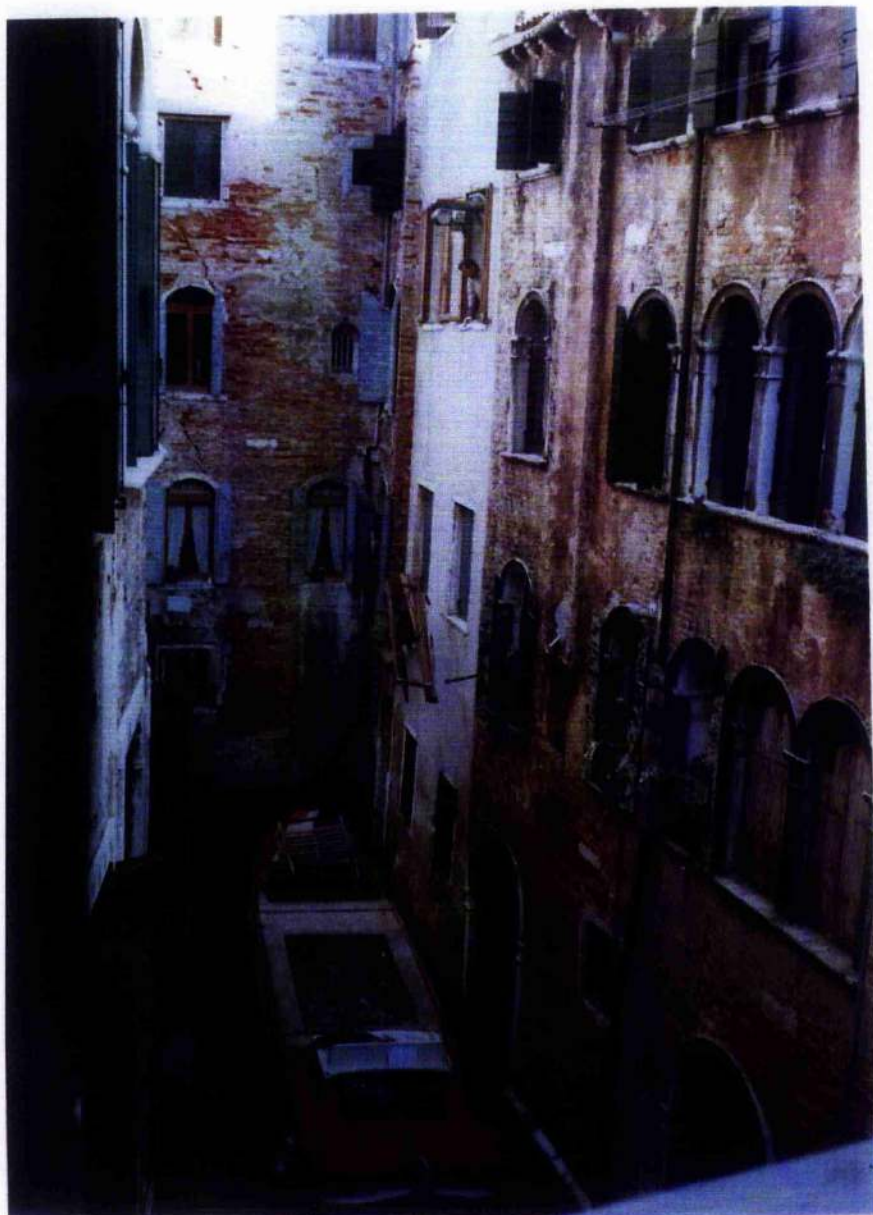


Plate 43.

Ugo Camerino. Sant' Anna house. 1996- 2005.



Plate 44.

House on Rio terra S. Leonardo.



Plate 45.

House on Calle Cristo.



Plates 46 – 48. Photographs of house on Calle Bressana, Venice.

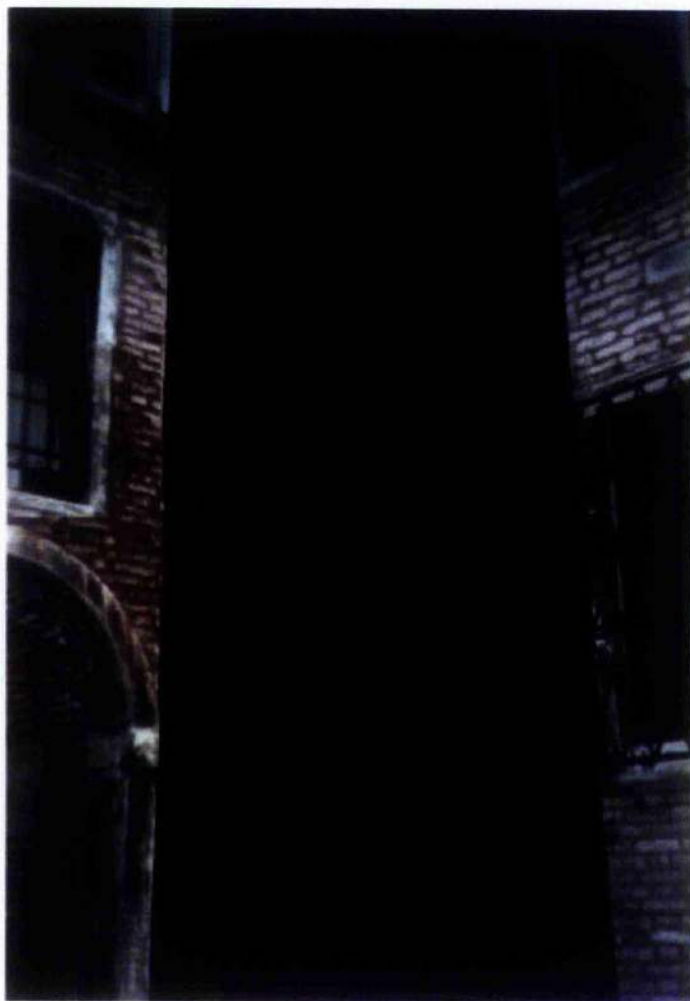


Plate 47.

Interior hallway of house on Calle Bressana.



Plate 48. Exterior courtyard of house on Calle Bressana.



Plates 49 – 50.

Working on the Venice canals.

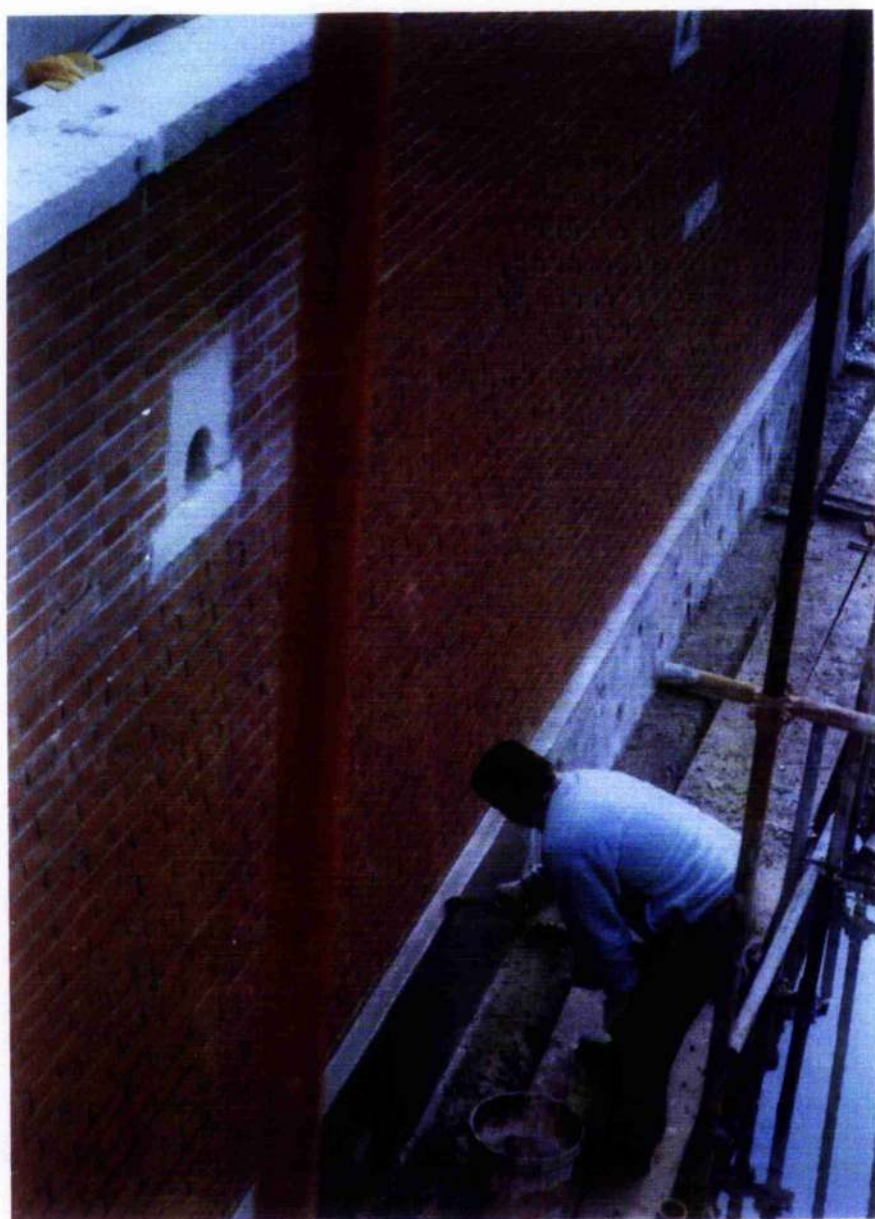


Plate 50.



Plate 51.

The Venice in Peril House. Calle Beccaria, San Giobbe.



Plate 52 – 53.

Sacca Gerolamo Housing Complex, Cannaregio. 1990.



Plate 53.

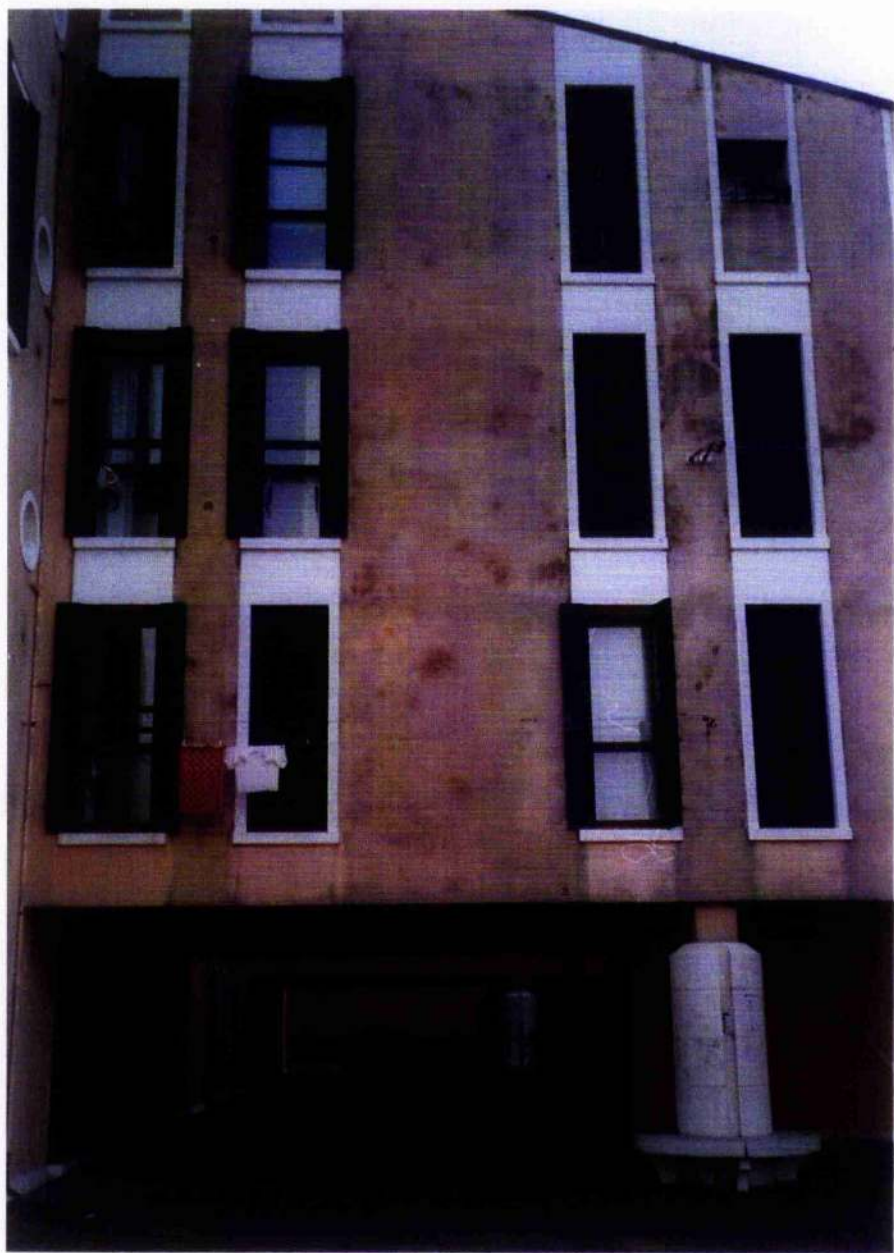


Plate 54.

Cappella Emiliani, Venice.

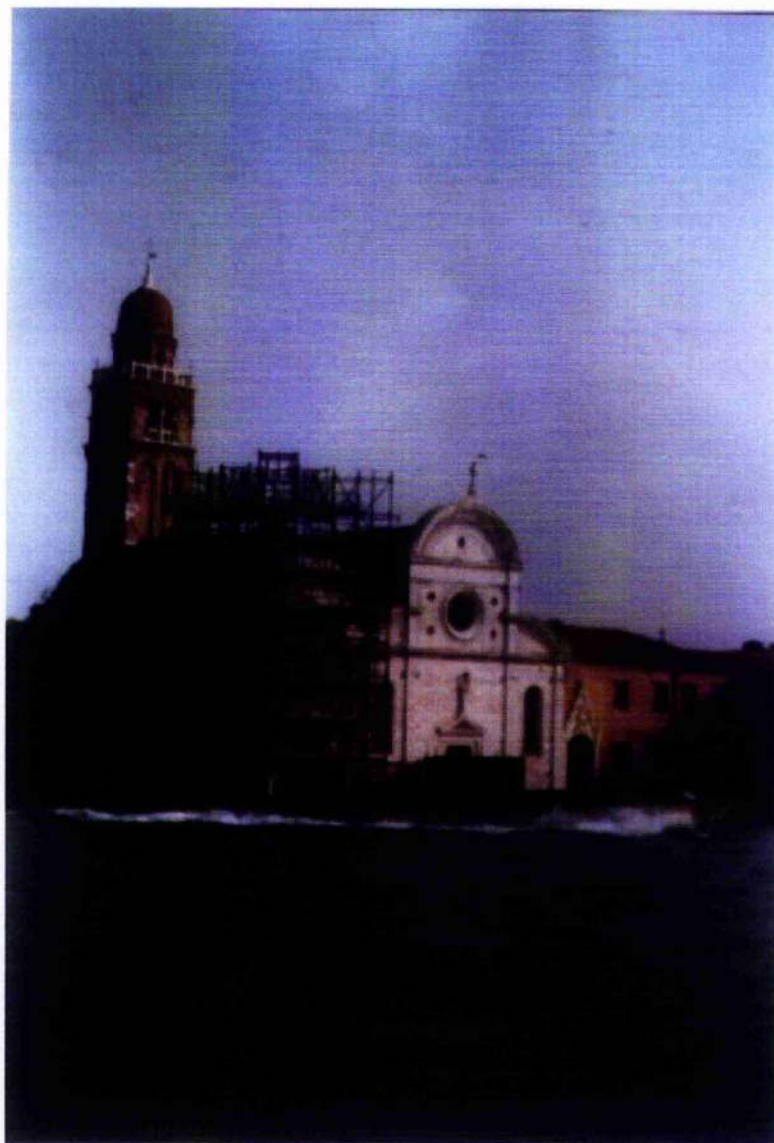


Plate 55-56.

Masegni.

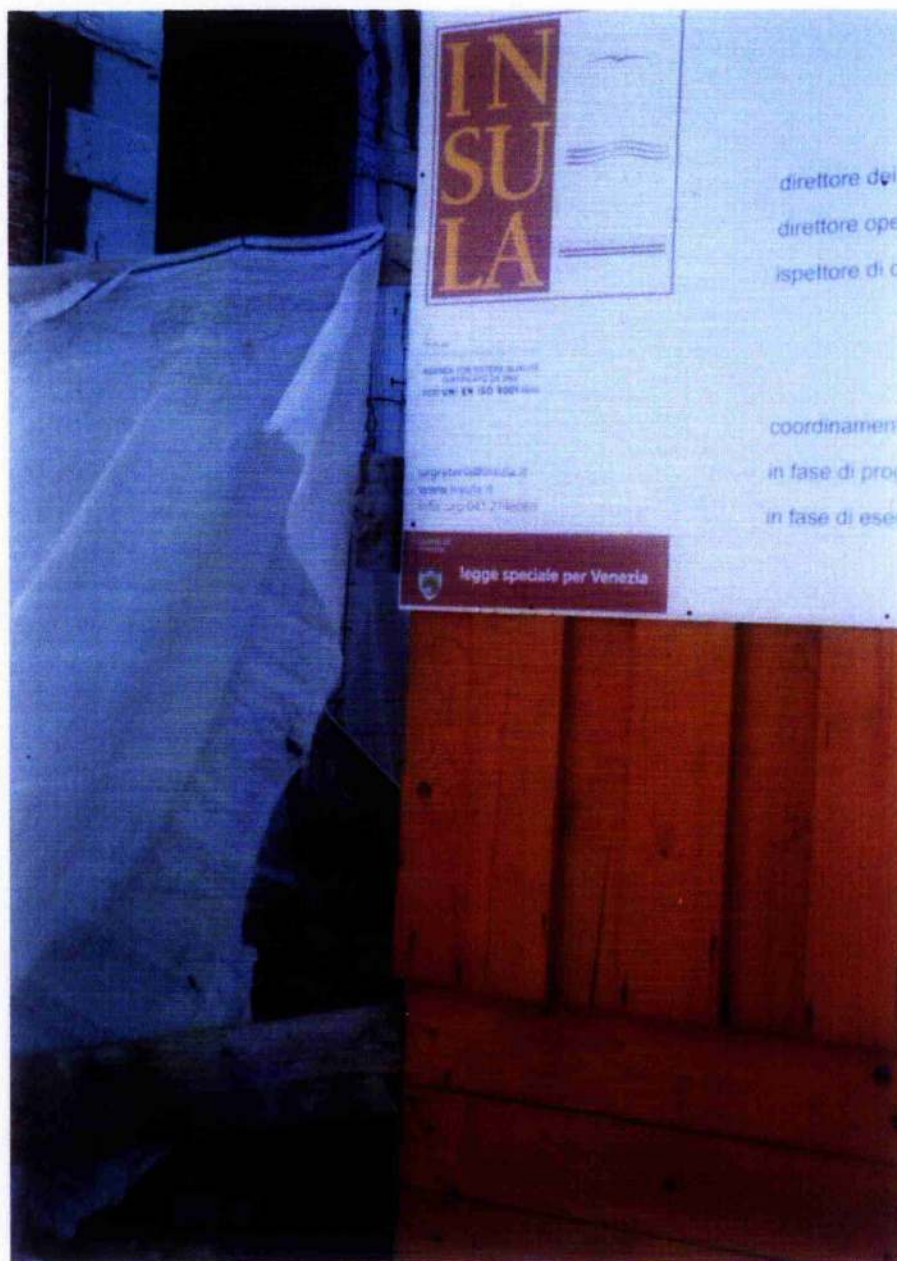
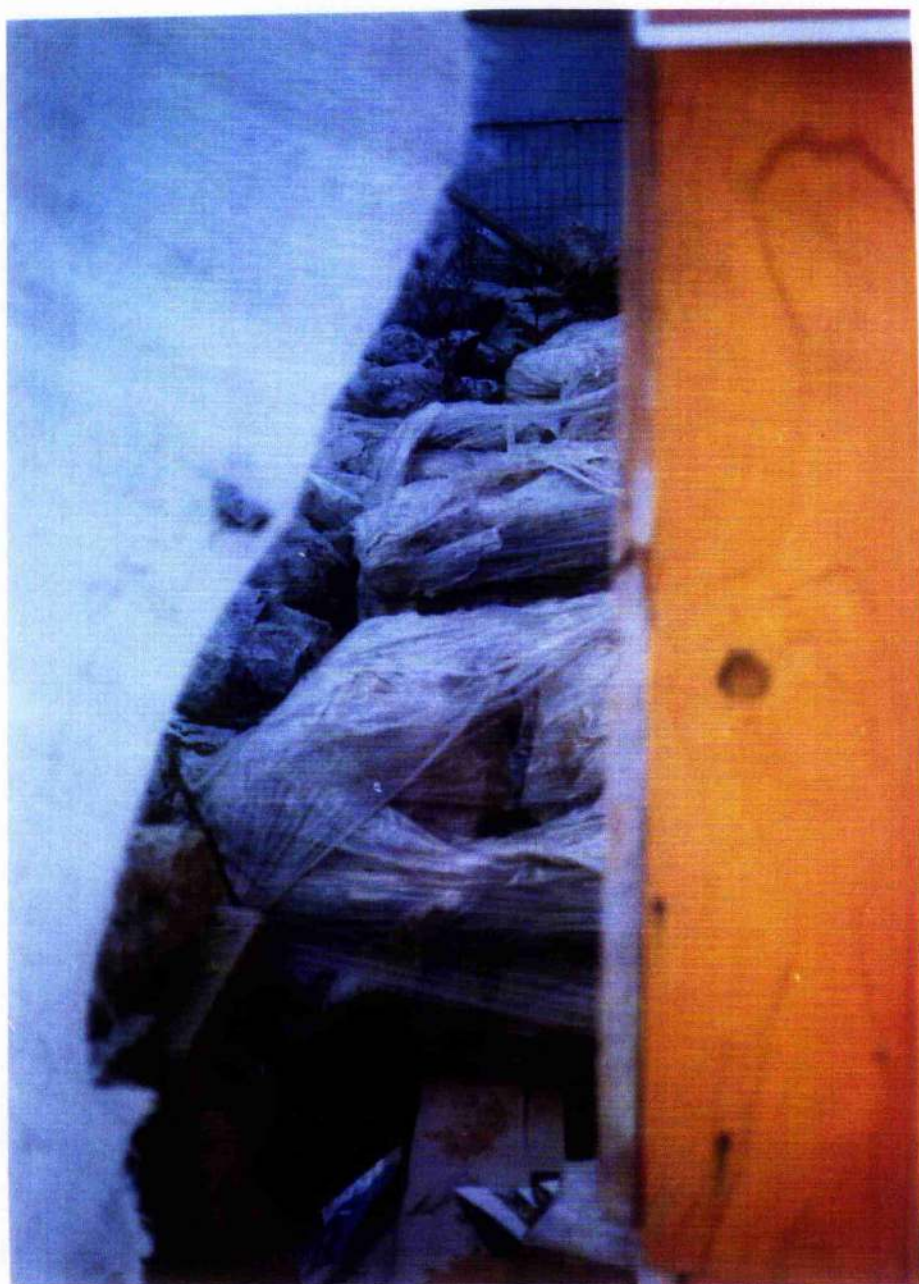


Plate 56.



List of Jurors for the 1991 Biennale Competition 'A Gateway to Venice'.

Kurt Forster

Francesco Gujotto

Arata Isozaki

Rafael Moneo

Jeoh M. Pei

Livio Ricciardi

Vittorio Salvagno

James Stirling

A representative from the Ordine degli Architetti

A representative from UIA

Francesco dal Co, *presidente*.

Buildings for Venice

*All pictures used with permission.

Realised.

1920's. New port at Marghera under way. Marghera and the Lido were seen as the place for new architecture as the modern had no need to be camouflaged.

From 1930's, modernism virtually limited to the Lido, but it was also permitted in the grounds of the Biennale.

1921.

Domus Civica. Calle campazzo. San Polo.

Architect unknown. Because of lesser architectural value this building was later totally emptied and rebuilt - a clear example of 'facadism'. This building is now used as student accommodation.

1922-3.

Duilio Torres. (Venetian)

Heliotherapeutic Hospital, Lido.

1928-1934.

Brenno Del Guidice. (Venetian)

Fire station at Rio Nuova, near Ca' Foscari.

1932.

Brenno Del Guidece.

Venetian Pavilion, Giardini di Biennale.

1932.

Duilio Torres.

Italian Pavilion, Giardini di Biennale.

1931-1934.

Eugenio Miozzi. Autorimessa Ina. Car-park at Piazzale Roma.

1938.

Luigi Quagliata & Eugenio Miozzi.

Palazzo del Cinema. Lido.

1948.

Marino Meo.

Hotel Bauer-Grunwald extension.

Carlo Scarpa also did a little known design for this project. It is said bad relations between the Venetian clients and Scarpa may have encouraged the clients to choose Meo's design over Scarpa's.

1950-1956.

Giuseppe Samona & Egle Trincanato.

INAIL. Centre.

1952-1955.

Paolo Perilli. Original design dates from 1934.

Santa Lucia railway station.

1954-1958.

Ignazio Gardella. House on Zattere.

1953 (i)

1957-80 (ii)

Carlo Scarpa.

Museum Correr interior.

1954.

A. Scattolin & L. Vetti.

Societa Adriatica di Elettricit  – SAE
headquarters.



1954-1956.

Carlo Scarpa.

Venezuelan Pavilion, Biennale Gardens. (Pic)

1957-58.

Carlo Scarpa.

Olivetti Store. Piazza San Marco. (Pic)



1960.

Carlo Scarpa.

Scatturin House interior.

1961.

Marco Polo Airport. Tessera.



1961-1963.

Carlo Scarpa.

Querini-Stampalia interior. (Pic)

1964.

Carlo Scarpa.

Casa Balboni interior.

1964.

Pier Luigi Nervi & Angelo Scattolin.

Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia. Campo Manin.

(Pic)



1966.

Carlo Scarpa.

Entrance to the Istituto universitario di architettura, Tolentini.

1966.

Ignazio Gardella.

AlbergoGritti Hotel. Piazza S. Maria del Giglio.

1976-1979.

Carlo Scarpa.

New design for the entrance to IUAV Tolentini.

1979-1980.

Aldo Rossi.

Teatro del Mundo.

Not permanent.

1979-1986.

Giancarlo De Carlo.

Mazzorbo Housing.

1980.

L. Semerani & G. Tamaro.

Extension to the Civil Hospital. Campo San Giovanni e Paolo.

1982-1989.

Iginio Cappai.

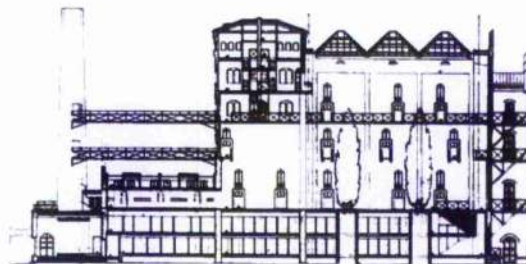
Sacca Fisola Housing complex. (Pic)



1983.

Giuseppe Cambriarsio.

Conversion of Dreher Brewery on the Giudecca. Residential apartments. Space also used by the Biennale. (Pics)



1984-7.

Vittorio Gregotti.

Public housing, San Giobbe.

1986.

Gino Valle.

IACP housing complex, Giudecca. (Pic)

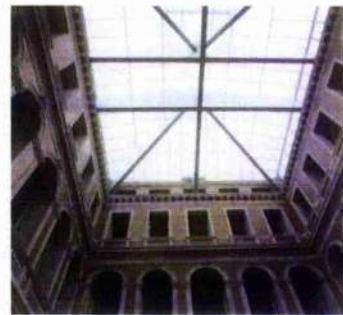


1986.

Gae Aulenti.

Restoration of the Palazzo Grassi, Grand Canal. Glass roof over the central courtyard. (Pic)

Because this building is protected under current laws and regulations governing buildings for public use, intervention was restricted. This glass roof was only permitted because there was originally nothing in its place. It is simply an addition.



1987-1990.

Franco Bortoluzzi and the architectural service of the commune di Venezia.

Sacca Gerolamo, public housing project.

1989.

James Stirling.

Electa Bookshop in Biennale Gardens.

1990-2002.

Vittorio Gregotti.

Housing Campiello ca Pesaro, Cannaregio.(Pic)



1996

Ugo Camerino.

Zitelle congress centre. Exterior sympathetically restored. Interior, extremely contemporary design using glass, steel, iron brackets and contemporary lighting. Endeavoured to produce a contemporary interior but used materials cleverly to remind the visitor of the history of the original building. An example of this is the system of steel roof supports that allows the original wood of the ceiling to be seen.

1996

Ugo Camerino.

Remodelled extension to the San Giovanni e Paolo hospital and new Accident and Emergency wing.

1996-present.

Molino Stucky building, Giudecca.

Currently the factory area is being converted into a 400-room hotel. It was recently bought by the Hilton group. In 1988 restrictions had been imposed to conserve the buildings as a group. The old mill is being converted into apartments.

1996-2004.

Ministry of Venice. Architect: Ugo Camerino.

The reorganisation of the ex-convent and military hospital of Sant'Anna.

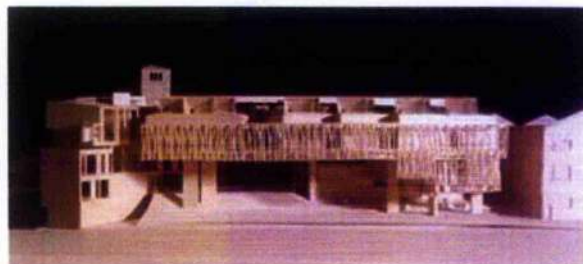
104 Apartments. Arsenale,

1998-2005.

Enric Miralles.

IUAV building, Santa Marta.

(Pic)



1998-present.

David Chipperfield Architects.

Extension to San Michele Cemetery.

Following an international competition, this proposal was selected to extend and redefine the island of San Michele. The proposal sought to redefine some of the cemetery's former tectonic and physical qualities.

1999-2000.

Boris Podrecca.

Renovation of Ca'Pesaro museum.

1999.

New air terminal at Marco Polo Airport.

Commune di Venezia. New Airport Development Plan. (Pic)



1999-2006.

Vittorio Gregotti.

New library for the Ca' Foscari university – San Basilio port area.

Two brick warehouses are being transformed and structurally integrated into a single library.

2002.

Interior. Benetton Store.

Campo San Salvador. (Pic)



2003.

Ugo Camerino.

Port Authority building.

This design won a competition and replaces a warehouse that was built in 1930. It represents the beginning of the reclamation of the old harbour area of Venice. (Pic)



2003.

Gino Valle.

Public Housing project, Giudecca.

2002/3.

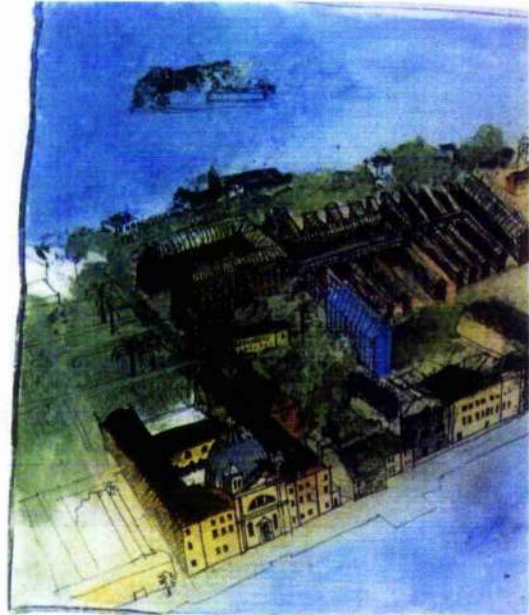
Cino Zucchi , Boris Podrecca, B. Huet, (L. Parenti and U. Barucco.)

Residential buildings, Giudecca. Former Junghans area – factory. (Pics)



2003 – present. The redevelopment of Campo di Marte. Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonino. (Pic)

The picture shows Aldo Rossi's original design for the project. The project accommodates 51 apartments that are for residents of the Giudecca whose own property has fallen into a state of disrepair. Plans have also been drawn up for a second phase of apartments with winning designs from Raphael Moneo and Alvaro Siza Viera.



2004-present.

Construction of new apartments on Giudecca. (Pic) Zuecca Uno Garden apartments and Giudecca Mare Redentore apartments both designed by the British architect Michael Carapetian. Marketed towards the foreign buyer – esp. American and British market – but 1/3 is being kept over for Venetian buyer.



2004-present.

Commune di Venezia.

Restoration and recovery of former Herion site and former Cnomv site, Giudecca, for office and cultural facilities.

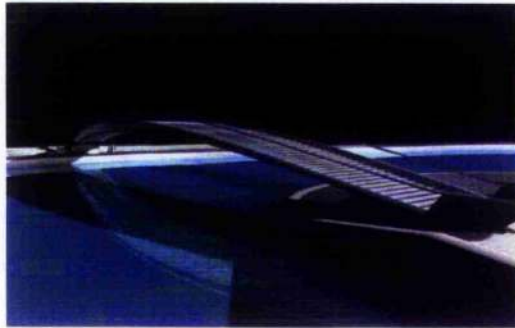
2004.

Santiago Calatrava.

Fourth bridge over the Grand Canal.

From Piazzale Roma to Santa Lucia.

(Pic). Many have criticised the placement of the bridge – so close to the Ponte dei Scalzi – but it is strategically positioned – opening up the neglected areas around Piazzale Roma.



The design was finished in 1996 and passed 2000. There was some controversy regarding the lack of access for the disabled. Calatrava modified the design to include lift running along side of bridge. Work began on the foundation for the bridge in March of 2004.

Designs. Unrealized works.

1953.

Frank Lloyd Wright.

Masieri memorial – design for student housing. Grand Canal.

1959.

Saverio Muratori.

Competition for the C.E.P quarter at the Barene di San Giuliano. Mestre- Venice.

Muratori's call for the city "as it was", and for buildings that slowly and collectively evolve- interested in displaying the crisis of the modern. His design shows an "open" development, one capable of changing into an urban continuum while maintaining a coherent relationship with the site.

1959.

Ludovico Quaroni.

Plan for competition as above. This design provoked a large scale debate amongst Italian urbanists. Quaroni's design is a disinterested reading of the historical morphology of the Venetian lagoon. The project alluded to the urban lesson of Venice's historical fabric: an illusion perceptible on a structural, rather than visual level – the intense stratification of the city. Quaroni's plan – a “plan-in-process, an “open work” of urban scale was based on his reflection on the American metropolis.

1964-1966.

Le Corbusier Hospital design.

1968-1974.

Louis Kahn.

Project for Congress Building.

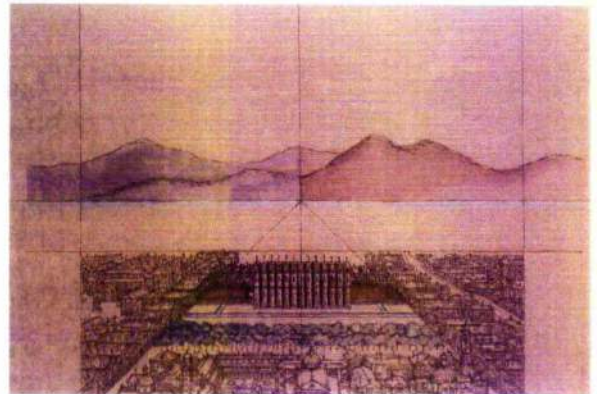
1978.

10 Immagini per Venezia. Biennale Exhibition.

Designs for Cannaregio. Fantasy Architecture.

John Hejduk, *Thirteen Watchtowers for Cannaregio.* (Pic)

Peter Eisenman. *Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital.*



In a model of west Cannaregio, Eisenman painted Le Corbusier's grid proposal for the hospital in gold and pink paint, like an icon. He was later to write that this project was “one of the last anguishes of heroic modernism.”

1980.

Renzo Piano.

Design for restructuring of Burano. The Neighbourhood Workshop Scheme.

1991.

Biennale International competition. Designs for Piazzale Roma & Palazzo del Cinema, Lido.

1993.

Renzo Piano.

Design for new train station at Mestre and Venice.

Venice.

The project is based on the premise that the road and rail terminal system in Venice should be redesigned to restore the historic island to its island status. The new station is situated on the dock along the Canale della Scomenzera, where there is easy access to the city across the bridge of Campo Sant' Andrea.

1997

Ugo Camerino.

Design for Gaggia pavilion Venice hospital.

1998.

Renzo Piano.

Design for Venezia Expo 2000.

1998.

The conterie council houses.

La Biennale competition.

Architect: Ugo Camerino.

1999

Ugo Camerino.

Fusina passenger terminal.

1999 (commissioned)

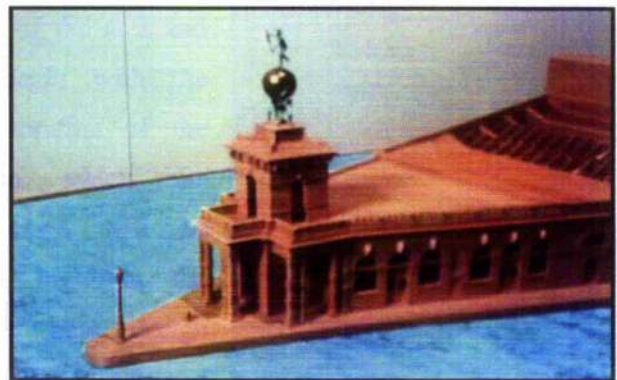
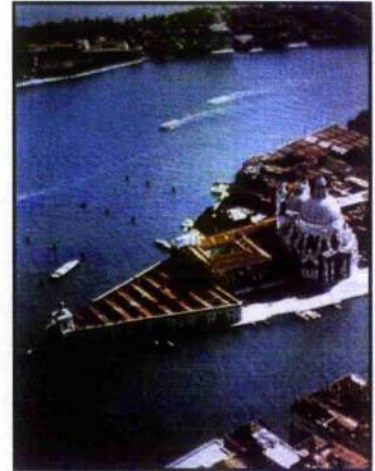
Vittorio Gregotti.

New Guggenheim museum of contemporary art – Punta della Dogana. (Pics). 17th Century former customs house.

In a press release in 1999 the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation said that it would undertake a feasibility study to examine all issues relevant to the development of the project.

In New York and Bilbao the projects were completely new, but in Venice the museum will be an intervention on a historic site.

“The project will concentrate on a modern reinterpretation of the area and buildings. It will begin with the “lightness” of the restoration of the historic complex, on which the contemporary interventions will be clearly legible as to highlight the dialogue between the new design connotations and the restored monument.” From Vittorio Gregotti’s website.

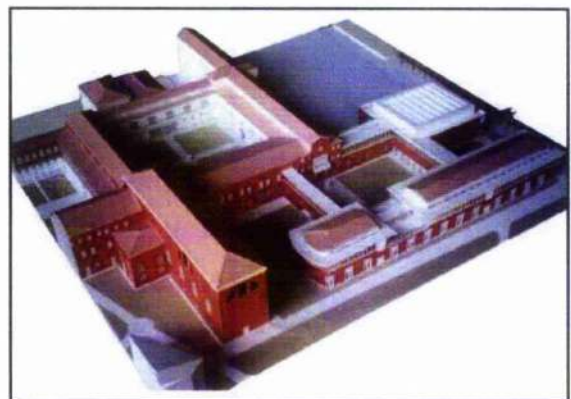


2002 (commissioned).

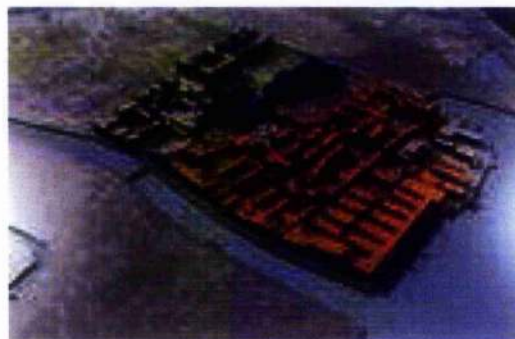
Vittorio Gregotti.

Reorganisation and restoration of the San Giorgio Island.

Cini Foundation commissioned Gregotti to draw up the project for the functional reorganisation and architectural restoration of the island. The master plan that includes the project for the island has been approved by Veneto Regional Council.



The project will attend to ageing wall faces and restore valuable architectural heritage. It will also revise the distribution of spaces and the various activities of each building – to include institutions and libraries, sports activities, Verde theatre and international art exhibitions.



2002.

Plans for redevelopment of San Giobbe district.

Development plan passed 1999. S.p.A and Enel Group.

Plans include the restoration of the botanic gardens and restoration and expansion of existing buildings for offices and metropolitan services.

2003-present.

Port of Venice redevelopment – Office districts and commercial area.

Cultural/exhibition centre- competition. First prize Ugo Camerino. (Pic)

Finalists include David Chipperfield, Boris Podrecca and Carlo Aymonino.



2003-present.

Initiatives to rejuvenate the former industrial area of San Giuliano on the edge of the lagoon has included the landscaping of an area that used to be Mestre's toxic waste dump. Strategically located on the edge of the lagoon between Mestre and Venice, it is the largest landscaped metropolitan waterfront park in Italy. The Architectural Record has described it as the most courageous work that Venice has carried out in the last hundred years. The area was made up mainly of petrol-chemical plants as

well as marshy waste ground. Fountain, ponds, pergolas and other ornaments are being set up. Sports club facilities, football field, roller skating rink and refreshment zone are all planned. There are ten kilometres of footpaths and cycle tracks. A yacht marina is planned for 2008 with facilities covering 12 hectares of terrain overlooking the lagoon for rowing and sailing clubs of Venice and Mestre.

2003-present.

Tronchetto island project. - Reception and technology park.

Redevelopment of the Arsenale. Business park.

Mipim.

Completion date originally given as 2006. Work has yet to begin.

Frank O. Gehry.

Congress Centre and boat terminal.

Sponsored by S.p.A SAVE.

2005-2006

S.p.A and SAVE initiative.

Restructuring and extension to Nicelli airport – Lido.

This includes the building of leisure and receptive areas.

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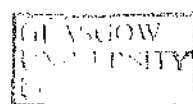
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