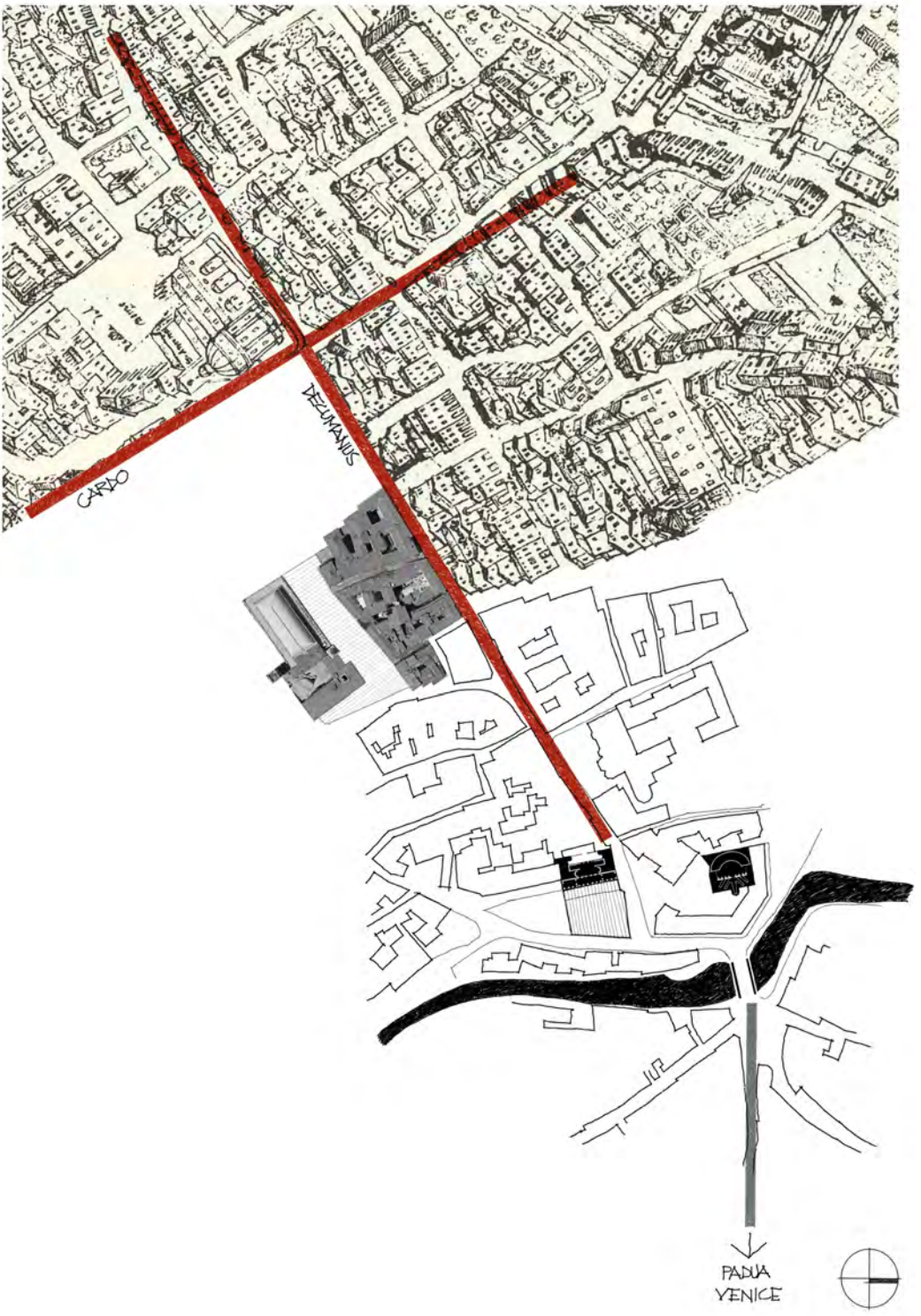


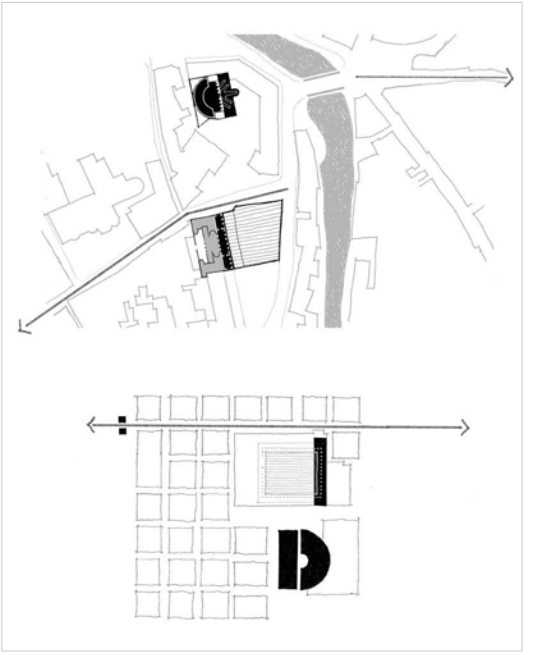
Patrizio M. Martinelli

Palladian Façades: Inhabited Thresholds and Theatrical Urban Micro-Cosms

Introduction[1]

Walking along Vicenza's Corso Palladio, after leaving behind the Basilica and heading east, we reach the end of our journey before crossing the Ponte degli Angeli bridge. Here, we encounter two magnificent buildings designed by Andrea Palladio. On our right, we can admire Palazzo Chiericati, a former private residential building now hosting the Civic Museum, with its monumental colonnade facing Piazza Matteotti, and beyond this square and a row of houses, the Bacchiglione river. On our left, through a courtyard, we can access the Olympic Theater, set up inside an existing building, whose exterior belies the magnificence of the interior. They belong to two different moments and phases in Palladio's life and architectural career: Palazzo Chiericati was designed in 1550, whereas the Olympic Theater is dated around 1580 and can be considered his final masterpiece, completed by Scamozzi after the architect's death. The two buildings can also be considered two protagonists of Palladio's idea of a city, which

1
Vicenza, analytical diagram. Palazzo Chiericati, the Olympic Theater, the Basilica as monumental civic buildings inserted in the urban fabric. Drawings and montage by the author.



2
Vicenza and Timgad, the theatre and the forum inside the urban fabric. Drawings by the author.

he was able to build, through fragments, in Vicenza [fig. 1]. Along with the reinvention of the Roman house—designing the urban palaces for the most important families of the time—and the transformation of the pre-existing gothic Palazzo della Ragione into the Basilica—named like the similar ancient Roman civil structure—Palladio seems to complete the re-birth of the Roman city inside Vicenza's urban fabric through two other fundamental core types such as the *forum* (Palazzo Chiericati) and the theater (the Olympic Theater) [fig. 2]. These buildings also define a very specific place. Both situated along the city's eastern edge of the *decumanus* (Corso Palladio), facing the Bacchiglione river and the bridge that crosses it (built by the Romans, and now called Ponte degli Angeli), they define the entrance to Vicenza from the cities of Padua, Treviso, and Venice. Finally, they represent a very particular idea of collective building, with a deep connection to the urban fabric and its constituents—the square and the street—via a specific

architectural feature, the façade. In these two buildings, the façade can be considered as a thick, inhabited, in-between space. It may be public and private, urban and domestic, exterior and interior (Palazzo Chiericati). Alternatively, it can be seen as an urban component brought inside the building to evoke and recreate an urban microcosm within an interior space (Olympic Theater). The following notes and reflections capture these aspects, demonstrating through a series of case studies how Palladio's ideas about the city, its buildings, and its architectural and urban elements are still relevant in contemporary times. They continue to contribute to the construction of meaningful places, both interior and exterior, in our cities and buildings.

The Palazzo Chiericati Method:
The Façade as Inhabited Thick Threshold

As Christian Norberg-Schulz points out, in Renaissance architecture, the façade represents the cosmic order that belongs to both the outside and the inside. Not only from a religious/ideological point of view but also tectonic and spatial. He explains that the "relationship between outside and inside comes into play, where the exterior acts as a preparation for the interior. The built form is façade as well as interior elevation, and spatial organization consists in a path which leads from the outside towards a goal within."[2]

In the Redentore Church in Venice, Palladio overlaps five façades one above the other, following a design strategy well interpreted by Rudolf Wittkower.[3] Each one of them is conceived as a projection of a component of the interior space: the entrance, the central nave, the chapels on either side, the transept, and the main volume that keeps together the whole. The elevation, as a thick and dense composition of planes, also clearly stands for the tectonics of the orders: pilasters, cornices, and gables are not flat representation, but have three-dimensional consistency. So, the interior, its character, and structural principles are anticipated clearly outside of the church.

We could also add that this Palladian "façade made of façades" considers the urban environment, with an architectural density that seems justified by the strength needed to establish relations with the powerful place, the Canale della Giudecca and the urban front on the other side of the canal. This aspect (possibly reminiscent of the Chiericati project) is very relevant during the processions dedicated to the Redeemer ("Redentore"), which started from the Doge's Palace, "passed over a floating route supported by boats [...], attracted and distracted the Venetians who followed this spectacular event while staying in their boats" or along the Giudecca's *fondamenta*.[4]

This "reaction" to the context is well expressed by the eighteenth-century Italian architecture and art historian Francesco Milizia, who links this aspect to the analogy between human physiognomy and architectural façades. He points out that the façade (as a human face that reacts to a particular context or situation) expresses "the nature of various buildings, which changes much due to the variety of their uses, sites and numerous other circumstances."[5] The façade is the architectural "response" to a given context, and gathers and defines the relations that the building establishes between interior and exterior, defining urban connections and the dialogue between these two spheres. Other aspects as the climate conditions, for instance, could influence the number and shape of the openings, the construction system, and the design of the urban elevations. In Venice, the façades are pierced screens of diaphanous loggias onto which the *piano nobile* faces, open and transparent to the light of the city. They seem to belong more to the canal than to the buildings and find a chromatic unity and surface rhythm alongside each other.[6] In the cities of northern Europe, on the contrary, the façades are built in front-gabled masonry and small openings placed along the streets, with pitched roofs fitted with dormer windows.

According to Colin Rowe, we can find a similar "response" to the conditions of the place in the façades of the Quirinale in Rome, one open onto the city street, the other onto the garden: "Thus, with respect to the street on the one side and its gardens

on the other, the Manica lunga acts as both space occupier and space definer, as positive figure and passive ground, permitting both street and garden to exert their distinct and independent personalities. To the street it projects a hard, 'outside' presence which acts as a kind of datum to service a condition of irregularity and circumstances (Sant'Andrea, etc.) across the way; but, while in this manner it establishes the public realm, it is also able to secure for the garden side a wholly contrary, softer, private and, potentially, more adaptable condition."[7] The different prospect (towards street/city *versus* towards garden/nature) molds architecture, the same building faces onto different places with a different inflection of the elevation.

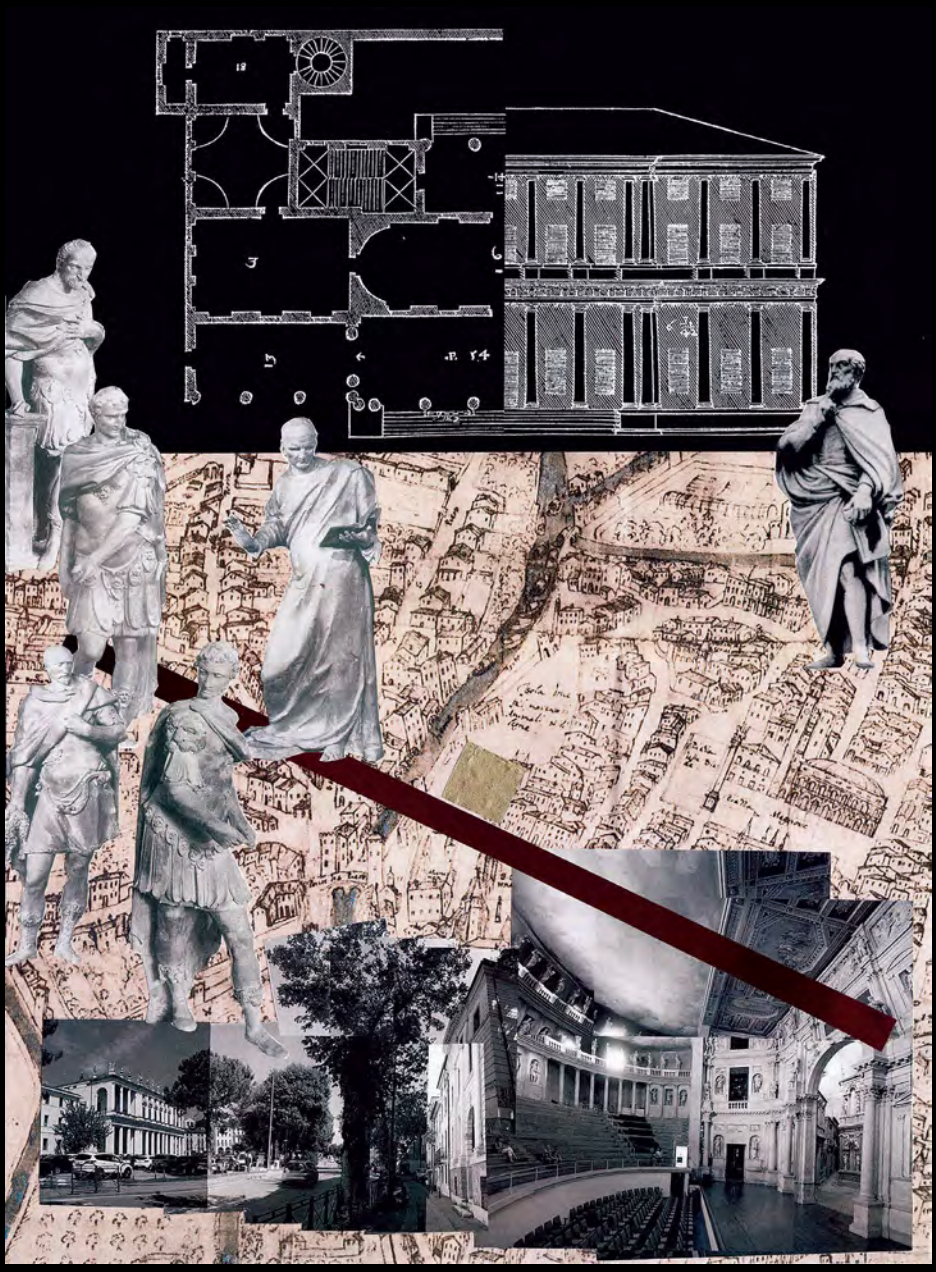
But there are other aspects to be considered. As pointed out by Rudolph Arnheim in his seminal book *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, the role of architecture is to reconcile the two worlds of dwelling, domestic and urban. On the one hand, it must provide shelter and protection, creating a congenial internal private environment; on the other, it must create a public exterior that "is never alone", that is part of an urban or natural landscape that influences or is influenced by the building. The great challenge for the designer "derives from the paradoxical contradiction between (1) the mutual exclusiveness of autonomous, self-contained interior spaces and an equally complete outer world, and (2) the necessary coherence of the two as parts indivisible of the human environment."[8] The place where the designer can solve this contradiction is the enclosure that separates inside and outside, the wall that belongs to both worlds. This "point of change—Robert Venturi explains—becomes an architectural event […], the spatial record of this resolution and its drama" that, if considered, "opens the door once again to an urbanistic point of view."[9] The façade, among all the walls that separate the interior from the exterior, is where the transition (the drama) between worlds is represented the most. This happens above all when this element turns from a simple two-dimensional vertical plane into a deep, inhabited space, and thus into a literal, figurative, and phenomenological place where the relations between interior and exterior,

public, and private dimension, and architecture and city find their representation, sense, and significance.

Therefore, the façade (aside from being a representation of the inside and a device that reacts to the outside, as previously argued) can be designed as a device that, simultaneously, separates and unites these two realms. It is interesting and challenging when this connection, as Aldo Van Eyck points out, is "articulated by means of defined in-between places which induce simultaneous awareness of what is significant on either side. An in-between space in this sense provides the common ground where conflicting polarities can again become twin phenomena."[10] Georges Teyssot argues that several architectural elements and spaces create the experience of this in-between, transforming it in an inhabited threshold between architecture and city: the doorway, the portal, the *portico*, the *peristyle,* the *narthex*, the triumphant arch. "These imaginary and tectonic lines—Teyssot explains—create not boundaries, but the space of the intermediate. A figure both in space and in time, the threshold, which is in the middle, is an interval between things. A medium, in a way, that by allowing entry, opens up the possibility of being in-between"[11], and being inside.

All these characteristics appear in Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza, which may be read, in the plan, and even in the elevation, as a composition of architectural layers that run parallel to the Piazza dell'Isola, evoking the spatial depth of the building, well anticipated by the façade. Palazzo Chiericati, Rudolf Wittkower argues, "has to be built along one side of a large square, and not in a narrow street. Palladio therefore visualized its façade in terms of a Roman forum and designed long colonnades in two tiers."[12] The use of columns, as Palladio explains in the *Four Books,* is a necessary spatial feature: "*Porticoes*, such as the ancient use, ought to be made round the piazze."[13] The façade is resolved with a broad *portico* on the ground floor and a *loggia* on the *piano nobile*, which constructs "a three-dimensional architecture, where space becomes an integral part of it, incorporating itself there and becoming a decisive feature of it."[14]

3
Andrea Palladio, Palazzo Chiericati and the Olympic Theater, Vicenza. Fragments of a theatrical urban experience. Montage by the author.

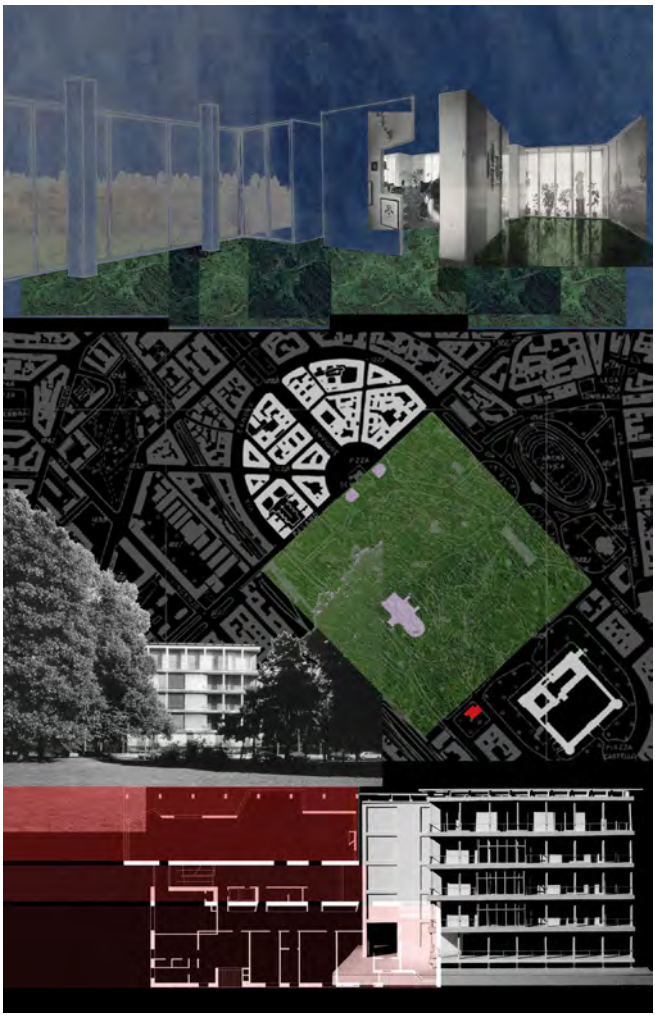


This architecture has part of its rationale associated with an open public space. The idea of the overlapped transparent colonnade is represented clearly in the illustration of the façade shown in the *Four Books*, where the walls of the central bays of the *piano nobile*, which interrupt the openness of the *loggia*, are rendered like those more withdrawn, restoring the continuity and transparency of the *chiaroscuro* to both floors. The orientation of the building, facing east and the sun path, also allows these dramatic, almost sculptural, effects of light and shadow. On the ground floor, the portico belongs to the city as a shady, protected, and safe public space: it is actually an urban space between the city and the interior, the reinvention of a Roman *forum*. The upper *loggia* belongs to the residents' private realm, where they can stay and experience the outside through a privileged view of the city, but it is also a place where the aristocratic family's power and wealth are represented to the people in the square itself, transforming the place in an open-air theatrical space [fig. 3].

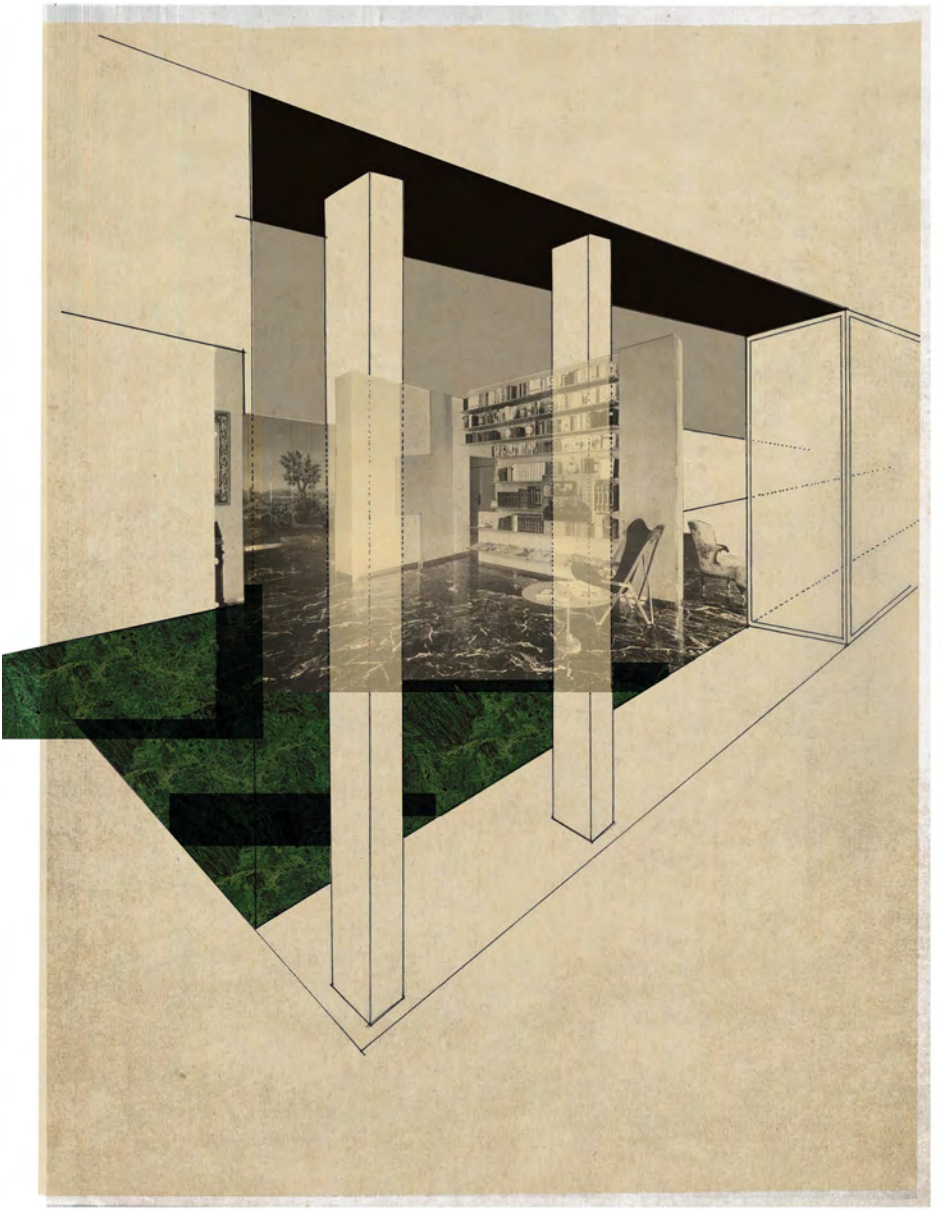
We can find some analogies with this project in many buildings in which the façade is the element that creates the connection with the urban environment while also forming an architectural inhabited space. The work of Le Corbusier, after the Purism era, can offer many examples. From the Immeuble Clarté in Geneva[15] to the Unité d'Habitation, from House Curutchet[16] to the private and collective buildings in India, the Corbusian façades become actual places, with the introduction of the sun-breaker, designed as a protective device but also as a sort of re-invention of the traditional *loggia*. "Every unit is protected by a sun-breaker, which is actually the *loggia* of the ancient Mediterranean Greek, Roman, Italian tradition", declares Le Corbusier in 1951.[17] The façade, so thick that it could recreate the play of light and shadow that belonged to ancient architecture, becomes an inhabited space and a monumental device to frame the outside world from the interior, and the inside from the outside.[18]

Similarly relevant, as a reinvention of the conceptional idea of the Palazzo Chiericati, is the Tognella House in Milan, also called "House in the Park" (1947–1953), designed by Ignazio

Gardella in front of Parco Sempione.[19] As Rafael Moneo points out, Gardella's contribution to architecture is to "insert on the structure of Modern architecture the principles and criteria established in Renaissance and effective for centuries."[20] Art historian Giulio Carlo Argan underscores how in Gardella's research, "the building is nothing else but the formal definition of an environmental situation", where the environment is "the dimension of



4
Ignazio Gardella, Tognella House, Milan. Drawings and montage by the author. Model by the students of University IUAV of Venice, academic year 2008–2009.



possibilities: open toward the past, through memory, and toward the future, through imagination."[21] The building has five floors, with one big apartment each. The plan of this five-story residential building is divided into three rectangular parallel spaces, running parallel to the street, as in Palazzo Chiericati. The one that contains the bedrooms and the services has a conventional layout of closed rooms and equipped hallway, with an exterior envelope made of solid opaque walls cut by vertical openings. The central part contains the staircase, elevators, and hallways [fig. 4].

The part facing the park is an open space where the dining room, living room, and studio flow one into the other, open to a balcony that runs across the whole façade. A monumental frame of pillars and slabs, as a vertical composition of "hanging *porticoes*", which recalls the giant order of classical architecture, defines this main elevation. The contrast with the opaque volume behind it is evident, and being slightly shorter, it appears to be a detached and independent component of the building. Behind the frame, Gardella designs the envelope that encloses the interior as a broken line made of thin solid panels but mostly of big floor-to-ceiling windows, as an asymmetrical free form flowing behind and between the pillars. This is one of the "transgressions" typical of Gardella's architecture, as Argan calls them: the capacity to take composition beyond the expected and the predictable as a pure act of imagination and invention.

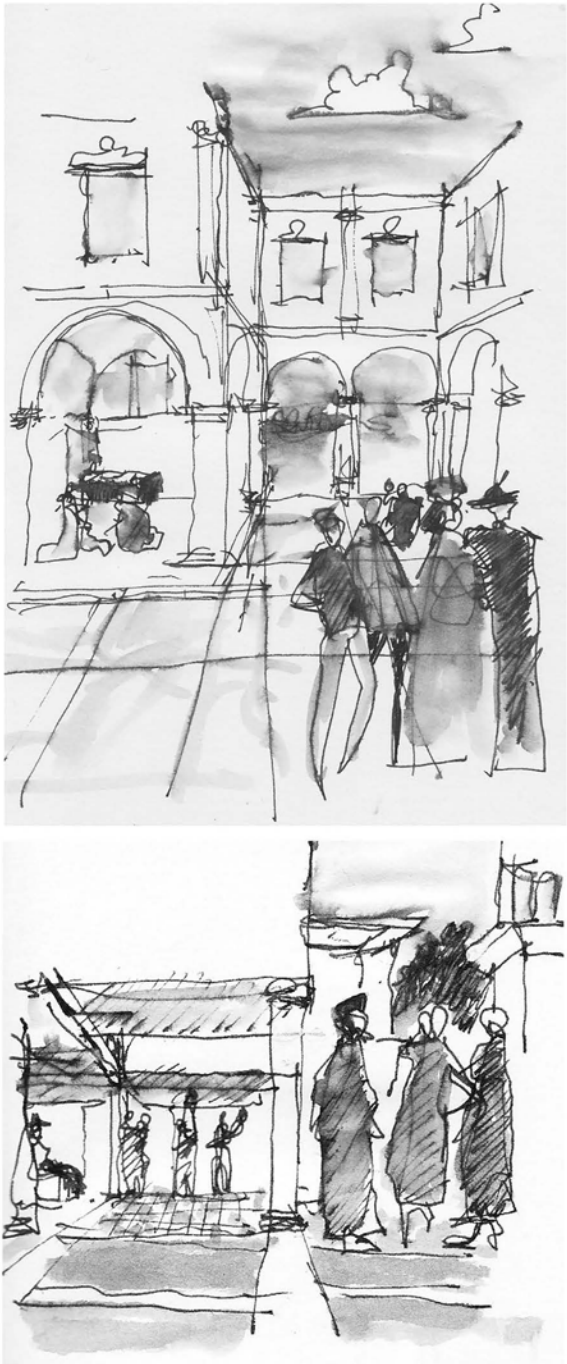
Yet, Argan notes, this is not a simplified personal gesture abstract from reality, but a reaction to light and atmosphere and the actual life inside the building.[22] From the inside, the vertical composition of the pillars frames the view towards the park, which is a consistent presence in the interior, enclosed by the transparent thin wall of windows. This flowing envelope, which sometimes incorporates the pillars into the interior, seems to extend and contract under the vital pushes of the interior and as a reaction to the outside. As Robert Slutzky notes in a brilliant metaphor that describes the post-purist Corbusian façades, it is like a lively device "made to absorb all the energies present in the architectural milieu, participating in a fluid interchange"[23] [fig. 5].

5
Ignazio Gardella, Tognella House, Milan. The inhabited façade. Drawings and montage by the author.

As in Palazzo Chiericati, in the Tognella House, the play of light and shadow contributes to the perception of the thickness of the façade from the outside and clearly shows the tension between the classical rigidity of the pillars and the gracious and sculptural arrangement of the thin wall behind them. Since in front of the building there is an open space and a huge park, this *chiaroscuro* play helps to give visual strength to the building, also when seen from a distance. This is the result of the fertile and balanced tension between memory and invention,[24] and a tribute to how architecture was built in ancient times.

The Olympic Theater Method:
Theaters and Domestic Scenes as Urban Micro-Cosms

It is well-known that the theatrical representation belongs to the city far earlier than its expression and realization as an architectural type. As Bernard Rudofsky points out, "the street is where the action is […], the street itself has been the great world theater. Drama and comedy, both spontaneous and contrived, were supplied by daily life."[25] Even in contemporary times, the spontaneous representation of the citizens' life takes place on the streets, in the open air, with real buildings as a backdrop. There we witness funerals, weddings, religious processions, secular festivities and triumphs, or even the theatrical plays of actors and dancers. In Medieval Europe, theatre was performed in the public space of the cities, with small temporary stages and cloths as the backdrop. As Florian Beigel notes, "people watching the performance were both engaged in the daily life of the city and all the other things that were happening in the square, as well as the imaginary world that was made by the musicians and the performers."[26] During the Renaissance, theater informed the interpretation of the world,[27] as a real performance (set in the city fabric) and a conceptual idea of the human existence. In Florence, for instance, the Uffizi palace and its *piazza* can be read as theater and stage.[28] In Venice, according to Alban Janson and Thorsten Bürklin, "anyone who enters a Venetian *campo* (small square) is subconsciously aware

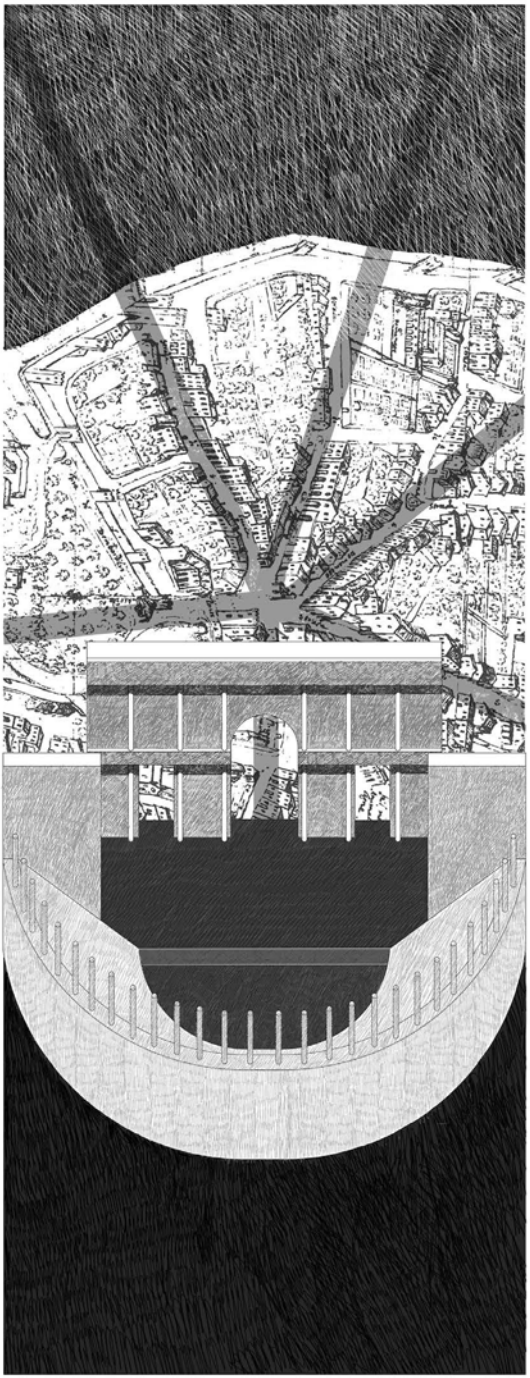


6
Pietro Perugino, *The Miracles of San Bernardino. Miracle baby born with one dead*, and Piero Della Francesca, *Flagellation*. Drawings by the author.

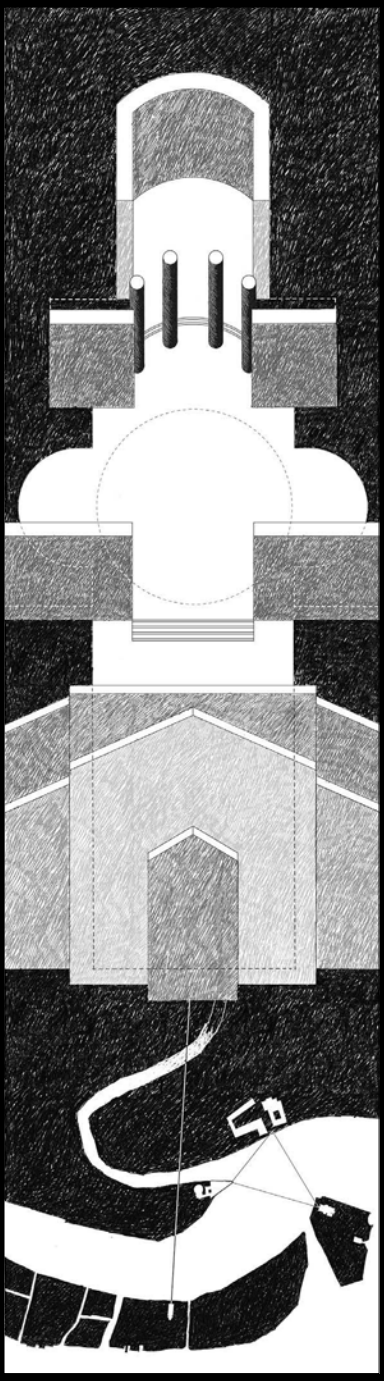
of the scenic effect of the public space, struck by a sense of having stepped onto a stage."[29]

This character of the urban environment—interpreted as a theatrical stage (and it is important to highlight that the word "scene," according to Renaissance scholar Leone de' Sommi, derives from the Hebrew *scèhonà*, which means "street with several buildings")[30]—also informed the representation of the city and its citizens' lives. Among many, in Pietro Perugino's *The Miracles of San Bernardino. Miracle baby born with one dead* (1473) and Piero Della Francesca's *Flagellation* (1455–1460), architecture is represented as an ambiguous theatrical stage, an interior with strong relations with the exterior. Even earlier, the backdrop of the *Miracle of San Zenobio* by Domenico Veneziano is represented as an urban street with overlooking buildings: the painting dates to 1445, a century earlier than Sebastiano Serlio's codification of stage design as a "reinvention" of urban space,[31] later built by Palladio and Scamozzi [fig. 6].

In Palladio's project for the Olympic Theater—the first to be conceived and built as a proper building type and not anymore as a temporary installation—the Vitruvian theatrical archetype codified by Vitruvius (slightly distorted and adapted to the existing envelope of the building) is inserted inside an existing building.[32] In front of the auditorium, the *scenae frons* is designed as a triumphal arch or the façade of a palace. Architectural historian Licisco Magagnato argues that Palladio wanted to recreate on the stage an urban public space defined—as the Greek and Roman squares—by *porticoes*, like the ones described in the *Four Books,* where people could stand and watch the theatrical representations.[33] Magagnato even mentions Renaissance poet and dramatist Angelo Ingegneri, for whom the stage of the Olympic Theater could be interpreted as a *piazza*, a street, or another kind of public urban space, and the *scenae frons* as the urban loggia, or the classical *peristylium* that defines this ideal square where the actions and performances take place.



7
Andrea Palladio, the Olympic Theater, Vicenza. The *scenae frons*, designed as a fragment of public building set up in the interior, evokes an urban micro-cosm. Drawings and montage by the author.



Beyond, lies a system of urban streets, that evoke the seven roads of Thebes but can even be read as a fragment of the city that Palladio was building in Vicenza. In this regard, looking at the plan of the theater inserted in the map of the city, it is interesting to notice how the central five *trompe l'oeil* streets that depart from the *scenae frons* seem to mimic and evoke—also considering their real location and orientation—the actual five real streets of this eastern part of Vicenza. Beyond the bridge on the Bacchiglione, they lead to the countryside, to Padua, Treviso, and, farther away, to Venice. This aspect, together with the montage of the urban fragments such as the façade/loggia and the street fronts within the building, ideally transforms the interior into a metaphorical exterior and transfigures Thebes into Vicenza. The existing building's envelope and ceiling, painted as a cloudy blue sky, dematerialize in the spectator's experience. The enclosed space of the theater becomes an open space, a square in the city of Vicenza [fig. 7].

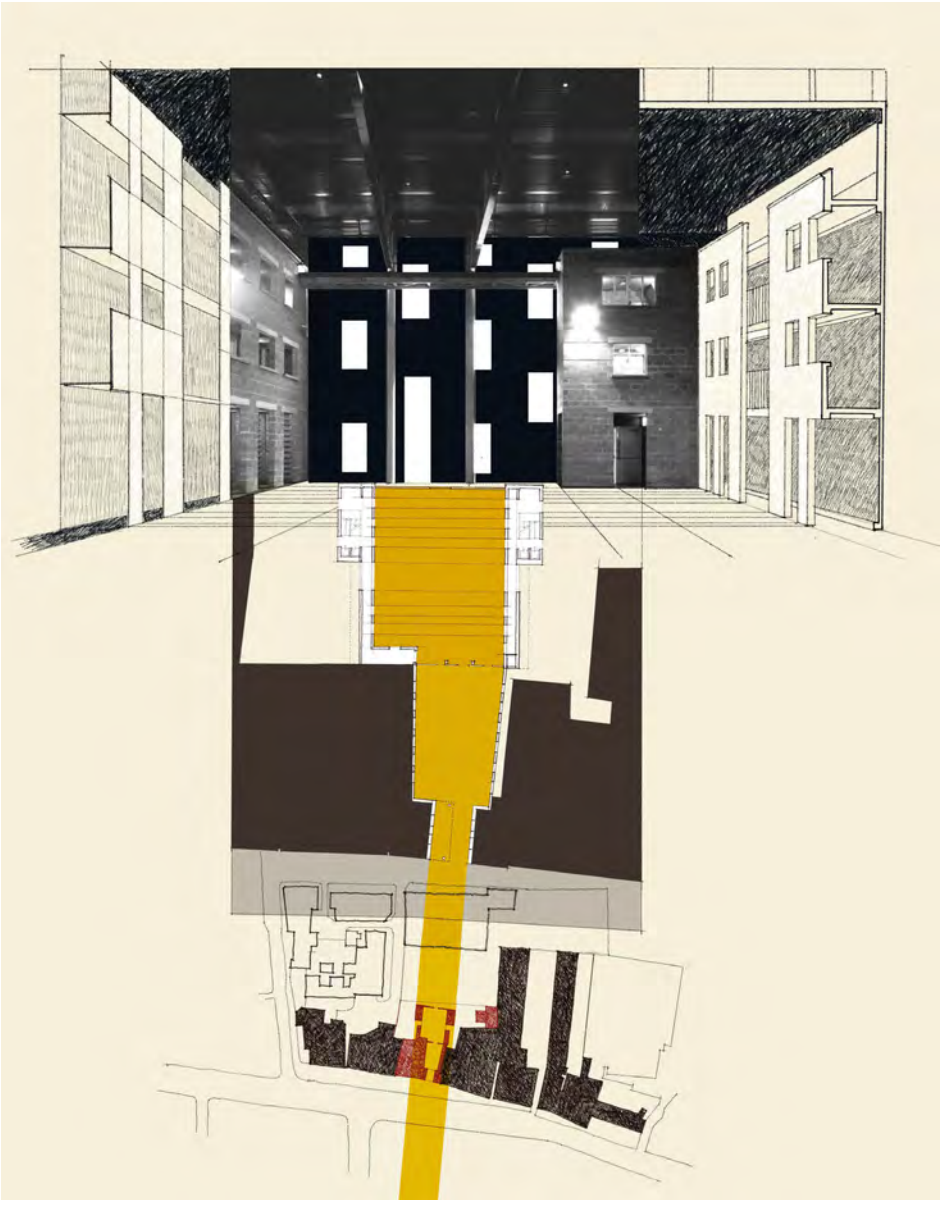
The theatrical component is also evident in the interiors of the churches designed by Palladio in Venice. As Magagnato points out, "we can see an effect almost of stage design in his insertion of space within space: certainly, the fruit of his loving study of late Roman architecture." He continues that in the Redentore and San Giorgio churches "we have the most striking illustration of his use of these ample spaces seen through great colonnades that have the effect of walls. I should like to call them Veronese effects. But Palladio is not trying to give the effect of a wall pierced by openings. He is seeking an effect of light and freedom: to set his structures in zones of space and light that are, however, defined and firmly tied down into the composition by the linking of the structures that lie behind".[34] The colonnade, or *perystilium,* through which we can perceive the intimate space of the choir, also works as a backdrop for the ritual of the mass, celebrated in front of the spectators, sitting in the nave. This spatial arrangement, very similar to Palladio's proposal for the Olympic Theater (the backdrop for the theatrical play that frames the space behind it), is clearly discernible [fig. 8].

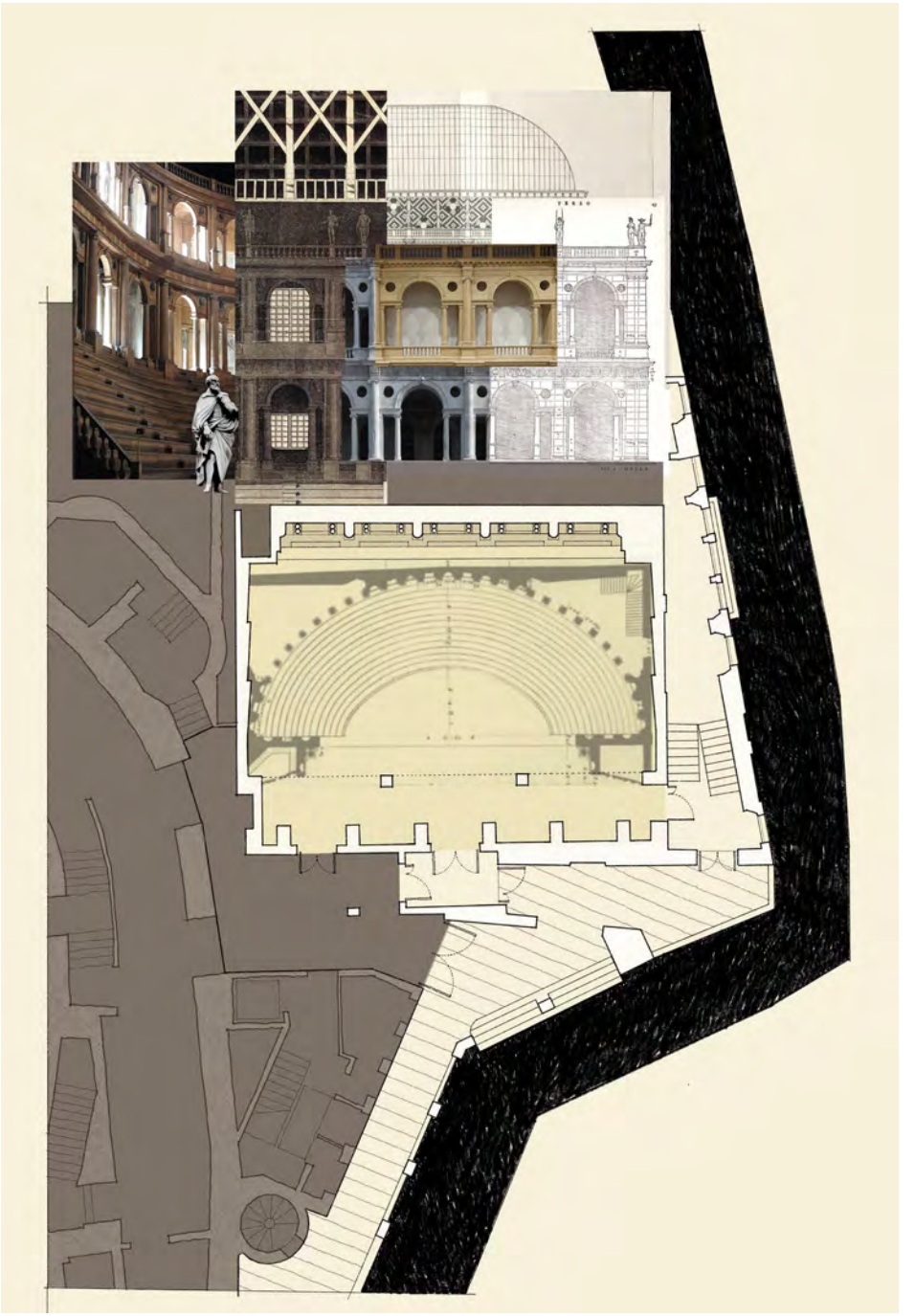
8
Andrea Palladio, the Redentore Church, Venice. The façade as stratification of planes anticipates the interior theatrical transparencies. Drawing by the author.

Palladio's lesson in the context of theater design (as Scamozzi's theater in Sabbioneta or the Farnese Theater in Parma, where a fragment of Palladio's Basilica defines the auditorium) is still relevant in contemporary times. The most remarkable example with respect to this is certainly the Half Moon Theater in London, completed in 1986 and designed by Florian Beigel and the Architecture Bureau.

The overall intervention is conceived as a sequence of spatial experiences and spaces starting from the entrance and leading to an open-air courtyard defined on the sides by galleries—enclosed by façades that mimic residential buildings—and eventually the covered theater. These "negative" open spaces are "carved out" from the urban fabric, creating a series of squares (covered and uncovered), that blend one into the other, as in the map of Rome drawn by Giambattista Nolli in 1748. "The space of the building is conceived as a void", notes Beigel, "the void is the figure, […] the void space is for us the essence of space."[35] Analogously to the open courtyard, and with a strong intellectual relationship with Renaissance models, the theater is conceived as public open space, a square, surrounded by buildings, or, better, by three-story façades with galleries behind and covered with a roof. Porticoes and doors open to the piazza on the ground floor, where people can freely sit and movable seating devices can be arranged in flexible configurations. Elizabeth B. Hatz defines all these elements and spatial sequences "as a Borges-like collection of labyrinthine spaces that alternate in being the 'outside' of one another, making spatial relations theatrically ambiguous."[36] It is certainly evident, like already anticipated, that this project is, conceptually, "also a return to the street theater of the past or the play space in the market square where actors and audience mingled freely"[37], where the act of performance is contiguous with the everyday life of the street. All of these aspects (architectural and phenomenological), inserted within a building, transform the architectural interior in an urban microcosm, and thus in a fluid intersection of scales, between interior and exterior, morphology and typology; and transform Rossi's "architecture of the city" into Beigel's "architecture as city"[38] [fig. 9].

9
Florian Beigel and the Architecture Bureau, Half Moon Theater, London. Drawings and montage by the author.





The work and design principles of the Renaissance masters and the theme of theatricality are an active presence in Aldo Rossi's theoretical speculation and design explorations.[39] The idea of shifting a fragment of the city inside an interior space is evident in his projects such as *Little Scientific Theater* (1976), *Theater of the World* (1979), *Interior with a Theater* (1982), and *Domestic Theater* (1986). However, Palladio literally comes into play in Rossi's project for the reconstruction and renovation of the La Fenice Theater in Venice, which had been partially destroyed by arson in 1996. In the context of this very complex intervention, he designed a small rehearsal room (the "Rossi Room") where one of the interior elevations is a reproduction in wood of a fragment of the façade of Palladio's Basilica in Vicenza. Similar to Renaissance masters' practice and the realization of the Baroque Farnese Theater in Parma, a façade is set up inside the building. This interior façade and "fixed stage" of the interior of the room (which resembles and functions as a tiny theater) defines a piazza (Piazza dei Signori in Vicenza). Thus, like Palladio, Rossi reproduces the city inside the architectural interior, using the façade as a deliberate and tangible device. Rossi chose the façade of the Basilica "not only because it is beautiful, but also because it is an attempt to recreate inside the building that specific Venetian world, between history and invention" [fig. 10].

The Renaissance theatrical interpretation of the world also informed Andrea Palladio's design for the villas for Venetian aristocrats, which were complex buildings that kept together the functions of agricultural production, territorial control, and the need to affirm and communicate the elevated social standings of their inhabitants. The villas had to serve these aims not only in the exteriors, as architectural backdrops in the Venetian landscape, but also in their interiors. One can find evidence in Palladio's writings in which he describes the core space of the villa as an actual theatrical apparatus for acting and seeing what is represented and performed: "The halls serve for feasts, entertainments and decorations, for comedies, weddings, and such like recreations; and therefore these places ought to be much larger than the others, and to have the most capacious form, to the end

10
Aldo Rossi, Rossi Room at La Fenice Theater, Venice. Like in the Renaissance theaters, a façade (the Basilica in Vicenza) is recreated inside the building and becomes the "fixed stage" of the interior. Drawings and montage by the author.

that many persons may be therein commodiously placed, and see whatever is done there."[41] The hall becomes a square, a *piazza,* an opportunity to ideally set up inside the house a Venetian *campo,* for the Venetian patrons, residing temporarily in the countryside. Not by accident, in the Villa Pisani in Bagnolo, the central hall is defined by interior façades designed with rectangular and thermal windows, even if they do not look out. In this interior "hall-as-*piazza*/*campo*" receptions and celebrations occur. There people can see and be seen, like in a public urban space [fig. 11, 11 a].

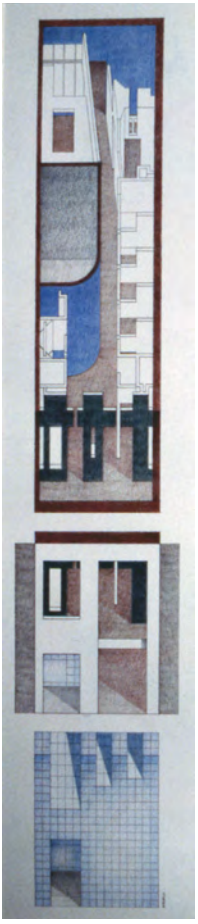
Similarly, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, theatricality was not limited to theater and stage design, but was also an important component of residential architecture in the work of British architects like John Soane. His houses can be seen as theatrical representations of his architectural universe, with façades playing a role similar to the prologue of a theatrical piece or even as theaters themselves.[42] In the Great Hall of the Audley End House in Saffron Walden (Essex, England) designed in the mid-1700s by John Vanbrugh—who was also a playwright—a

11 and 11 a
Villa Pisani,
Bagnolo, Lonigo.

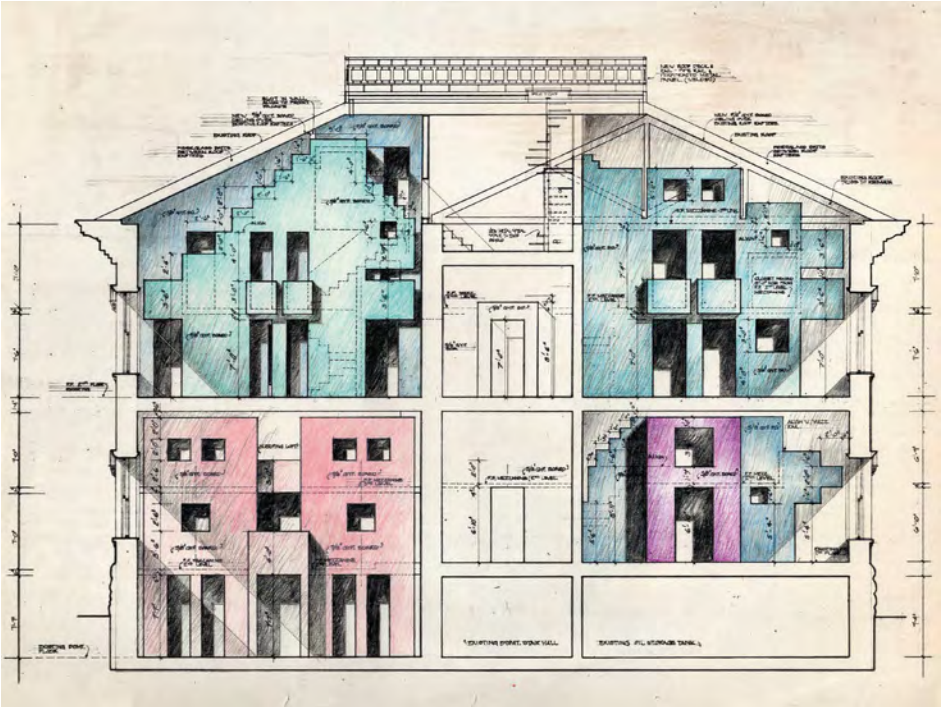
Fig. 12
John Vanbrugh, Great Hall of the Audley End House in Saffron Walden, Essex.

remarkable example of the theatrical insertion of an urban façade into a domestic interior space is well represented.[43] In the Great Hall, the architect removed an existing wall to enlarge the room. Furthermore, he added a grand staircase. He needed a supporting element for structural reasons, so he inserted a two-story screen made of stone, designed as a building façade, with pilasters and very wide arches. This allows transparency that reminds us of Palladio's theater and churches, or even his villas, performed "in the manner of a Veronese set piece in architectural style", as Fred Scott points out.[44] This design strategy amplifies the space alluding to what is beyond the screen (in this case the staircase that crosses the stone threshold leading to the mezzanine from where—through the screen—one looks down to the Great Hall), but also acts as a theatrical backdrop to the activities performed in the Great Hall [fig. 12].

More recently, the work of American architect George Ranalli exemplifies this strategy. In his project for the First of August Boutique in New York (1975–1976), the layered façade alludes to a transparent inhabitable thickness that extends the interior towards the street. At the same time, the shop's interior is designed as a street with a thick double-height wall that resembles an abstract *portico* [fig. 13]. Similarly remarkable is the renovation of the Callender School in Newport (Rhode Island, USA), transformed in 1979–1981 into a residential building with six houses intricately and carefully inserted into the existing two-story National Register Landmark Building from the late nineteenth -century. Inside, the architect set up a core element that crosses through the entire structure and contains the new apartments' kitchens, bathrooms, stairs, and more private rooms. The living rooms have double and triple heights strongly defined by this inhabited core that takes the shape of an interior façade with openings, balconies, windows, and portals. It is a house inside the house, an urban fragment facing the public space of the living rooms. As Anthony Vidler argues, "the apartments take on the form of abandoned palaces whose balconies overlook the deserted piazza below or out, outwards the empty countryside."[45] Ranalli, in the suburban American fabric that lacks collective public spaces, recreates the idea of an interior *piazza*, defined by interior façades which emphasize the theatricality of the domestic interior through "a magnificence of scale" and "a brilliant piece of scenography"[46] [fig. 14]. It is evident on the one hand the intention of blurring interior and exterior while almost de-materializing the brick envelope of the existing former school; and on the other to re-invent within the building the concept of public collective space, as a response to its absence in the urban fabric of the American suburbs.



13
George Ranalli, First of August Boutique, New York. Elevation oblique of the front façade, the existing building and the new interior.



14
George Ranalli, Callender School Renovation, Newport. East West Section of the south side of the building.

Conclusion

The relationship between inside and outside has always been a fundamental component in the construction of architectural and urban space. The façade is the most important element that can define this link and the variable degrees of openness between the two worlds. Palladio's façades can be read as an architectural canvas that represents the literal or technical manifestation of internal arrangements projected onto the external surface—in a sort of anticipation, from the outside, of the experience of interior space. As in Palazzo Chiericati, the façade might also be a thick and inhabitable threshold that becomes an interior space deeply connected with the urban realm. Another design strategy that

intertwines the interior to the outside draws from the theater, or better, from a theatrical idea of the world and the city, perfectly represented by the Olympic Theater. Here an imaginary city (that metaphorically represents Vicenza) is assembled on the stage and the auditorium, and transforms the interior space of the theater into an open space, a street, a square, and a courtyard, surrounded by buildings (and their façades).

In a contemporary global context, where façades are often designed as technological skins aimed at ensuring interior comfort, the exterior appearance tends to defy any relationship between the inside and outside, as well as any expression of the building's character and its connection to the surrounding environment. Despite this trend, there are architects from both modern and contemporary times who continue to explore the Chiericati archetype and the concept of an inhabited façade that transforms into an intermediate space, blurring the boundaries between the interior and the city, while celebrating the experience of both the building and its urban context. Inspired by the Olympic Theater, some architects have revisited Renaissance stage design, incorporating interior urban fragments into their work. This approach can also be applied to domestic spaces, where montage techniques—combined with a renewed focus on metaphor, symbolism, allegory, and analogy—enable designers to compose interiors that resemble urban scenes. The concept of the interior as a reinvention of a theatrical stage emerges, with the interior façade serving as a backdrop for the inhabitant's life, activities, and performances.

Endnotes

If not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author of this paper.

1 This essay includes parts (which have been expanded, revised, and re-edited) of an article published in Interiors. Design/Architecture/Culture, 2023, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online:http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/20419112.2023.2168052, and an article published in Journal of Interior Design, 2020, copyright Wiley, available online on https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joid.12163.

2 Norberg-Schulz 1984, 71.

3 Wittkower 1944, 119–122.

4 Foscari 2010, 238.

5 Milizia 1785, 183.

6 See Bettini, 1978.

7 Rowe/Koetter 1978, 79.

8 Arnheim 1977, 92.

9 Venturi 1966, 86.

10 van Eyck 1962, 602.

11 Teyssot 2013, 87–88.

12 Wittkower 1962, 81–82.

13 Palladio 1965, 72.

14 Forssman/Cevese et al. 1973, 100

15 See Martinelli 2018.

16 See Martinelli 2017.

17 Quote from Le Corbusier's lecture *Proporzione e tempi moderni* at the conference *De Divina Proportione*, at the Triennale di Milano in 1951, published in Cimoli/Irace (eds.) 2007, 99.

18 See Arnheim 1977, 233: "The function of leading in and out [...] is fulfilled by *brise soleil* shutters and similar transversal slabs, which lend depth to window openings and guide the eye from the outside through the wall to the interior."

19 See in particular Porta (ed.) 1985, Buzzi (ed.) 1992, Casamonti (ed.) 2016.

20 Moneo 2016, 17.

21 Argan 1959, 10.

22 Argan 1959, 15.

23 Slutzky 1980, 48.

24 See Rogers 2006/1961, 74: "Memory is the necessary element of artistic expression. [...]. Invention generates new phenomena characterized by personal action. [...]. The challenge is to find the dynamic balance between these two tendencies, so that the result (the synthesis) is always the affirmation of a present open to the future."

25 Rudofsky 1969, 123.

26 Bieigel/Christou 2013, 113.

27 Curtius 1983, 138–144.

28 See Fleming 2006.

29 Janson/Bürklin 2002, 15.

30 de' Sommi 1968, 14.

31 See Magagnato 1951.

32 See the diagrams in Magagnato 1992, 19–23.

33 Magagnato 1992.

34 Magagnato 1951, 218.

35 Bieigel/Christou 2013, 114.

36 Hatz 2019, 4.

37 Segal 1985, 16.

38 Beigel/Pritchard 2011.

39 See Ferlenga 1997, Celant 2012.

40 Rossi 1997.

41 Palladio 1965, 27.

42 See Furján 2002. On the theme of the house as a "theater of memory" see also Martinelli 2021.

43 See Neville 1836, Latham 1907.

44 Scott 2008, 101. In his book, Scott attributes this intervention to the Adam brothers.

45 Vidler 1988, 10.

46 Sorkin 1988, 6.