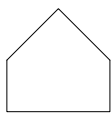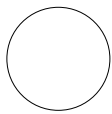# ARCHI_CATASTROPHES

STORIES OF MODERN DISASTERS

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ABSTRACT

La catastrofe ha in sé un fascino unico, è il luogo di suggestive dico-
tomie che si combinano in maniera sublime. I luoghi della catastrofe
mostrano la loro estrema vulnerabilità nel vuoto e nelle macerie nel
momento successivo al disastro, ma sono al tempo stesso caratteriz-
zati da una forza e a una potenza estetica senza pari. Queste ed altre
suggestioni hanno ispirato la stesura di questa ricerca che ha mosso
i suoi passi a partire dalla riflessione su cosa realmente significhi l'e-
vento catastrofico nel mondo dell'architettura, investigando sul ruolo
e sulle responsabilità dell'architettura e dell'architetto prima, durante il
disastro e nella definizione di nuova realtà che porta inevitabilmente le
cicatrici degli eventi. L'evento inaspettato, il trauma, la discontinuità,
hanno una forte influenza sul destino delle città, sulla cultura e sull'ar-
te. Dai terremoti agli incendi, fino alla bomba atomica, ogni catastrofe
si svolge come una tragedia autonoma. Il disastro segue un proprio
copione e approda ad epiloghi differenti in base a caratteristiche iden-
titarie dei luoghi e della cultura che investe.

Nella ricerca vengono trattate quattro catastrofi moderne: L'incendio
di Chicago del 1871, le guerre mondiali, il terremoto di Gibellina del
1968, e la catastrofe dell'edificio, rappresentata da un certo modo di
fare architettura dei nostri giorni. Ogni caso può essere letto come
una storia autonoma in cui il disastro trova il suo compimento e la sua
risoluzione, con esiti differenti. Gli eventi sotto esame rappresentano
particolari episodi della nostra storia che a causa della loro intensità
sono stati in gradi di provocare profonde cicatrici e di influenzare a
lungo termine la cultura e l'estetica dei luoghi in cui si sono verificati.
Ogni disastro citato ha innescato intensi dibattiti culturali e altissime
sperimentazioni artistiche e architettoniche che hanno cambiato i con-
notati delle città in cui viviamo oggi.

L'incendio di Chicago compare per primo non a caso. Il Big Fire del
1871 segna l'avvento della città moderna, sancisce l'estensione della
città a scala territoriale e il modello della città di Chicago verrà espor-
tato in tutto il mondo segnando profondamente le logiche di moderniz-
zazione delle città americane e successivamente in forme diverse, an-
che di quelle europee. Dalle ceneri di un incendio vastissimo nascono i
grattacieli, il legno viene sostituito con l'acciaio e la corsa alla crescita

crescita economica ha inizio. I grattacieli, simboli del potere economico sono i nuovi e indiscussi monumenti della modernità che ancora oggi si impongono con forza nelle skyline delle grandi città ad ogni latitudine.

A seguire, la distruzione portata dalle guerre e il progresso tecnologico ad esse connesso. L'atrocità e la violenza delle guerre lasciano in eredità, oltre alle macerie, un progresso tecnologico senza eguali che ha cambiato il volto delle città e lo stile di vita di milioni di persone. Le guerre mondiali rappresentano una delle pagine più tristi della nostra storia in cui si è assistito alla mutilazione fisica e culturale di alcune delle più grandi città europee, culminando con la bomba atomica che segna un'epoca e rappresenta il livello di distruzione più alto mai raggiunto dall'uomo. Nonostante la violenza con cui sono state rase al suolo città come Berlino, Dresda, Hiroshima, ciò non ha impedito a queste città di divenire nel giro di pochi anni più forti e moderne di prima. La ricostruzione si è compiuta sull'onda di un forte sentimento di riscatto e oggi queste città non sarebbero le stesse se non avessero subito il trauma dell'annientamento fisico, della tabula rasa.

Il terremoto del 68' di Gibellina è un esempio dell'alto valore culturale che la ricostruzione può assumere in un luogo dove la tabula rasa rappresenta la preesistente condizione culturale di una società, oltre che il vuoto fisico dato dal terremoto che l'ha colpita. In questo caso la ricostruzione è stata caratterizzata da un vero e proprio disegno di un'identità completamente nuova. Gibellina trova nel disastro l'opportunità per cambiare volto, per emanciparsi e rendersi visibile. È l'utopia di un sogno estetico nato dalle scosse del terremoto, è un fermento culturale che inghiotte le macerie di un paese anonimo, è la fondazione (fallimentare?) di una nuova identità.

Ma quali sono le rovine di oggi? In assenza di catastrofi, possiamo trovare nuovi tipi di rovine, luoghi dall'identità debole, parti dimenticate di un organismo che è la città contemporanea. L'architettura stessa può produrre rovine. Interviene con forza nel paesaggio e nel tessuto della città spesso con la stessa dirompenza di un terremoto. Si parla di un'architettura tracotante e poco sensibile che genera luoghi estranei in cui l'individuo avverte timore e spaesamento. La rovina è un brandello inservibile, un frammento incomprensibile, allo stesso modo un edificio può essere un elemento disturbante e indecifrabile. Qual è

I_ Hiroshima, 1945

allora il ruolo dell'architetto oggi? Si può parlare di un modo "giusto" di fare architettura? Esistono delle leggi da seguire per far sì che la catastrofe non si verifichi? Il progetto per la Città della Cultura di Santiago de Compostela è un esempio dello stato di difficoltà e di arbitrarietà in cui si trova l'architetto oggi, difficoltà aggravata dai contorni di un mondo che continua a cambiare velocemente e che diventa sempre più immagine e meno contenuto. La catastrofe dell'architettura sta nel non essere più in grado di trasmettere valori condivisi, nell'essere inghiottita dall'irrefrenabile voglia di apparire.

Ogni catastrofe descritta, è contraddistinta da un grado di coinvolgimento massimo di architetti artisti e ognuna ha lasciato alla storia una propria preziosa eredità.

E l'eredità più recente è ancora da interpretare.

INTRODUCTION

TU MOSTRI NON AVER POSTO MENTE CHE LA VITA DI QUEST'UNIVERSO È UN PERPETUO CIRCUITO DI PRODUZIONE E DISTRUZIONE, COLLEGATE AMBEDUE TRA SÉ DI MANIERA, CHE CIASCHEDUNA SERVE CONTINUAMENTE ALL'ALTRA, ED ALLA CONSERVAZIONE DEL MONDO; IL QUALE SEMPRE CHE CESSASSE O L'UNA O L'ALTRA DI LORO, VERREBBE PARIMENTE IN DISSOLUZIONE. PER TANTO RISULTEREBBE IN SUO DANNO SE FOSSE IN LUI COSA ALCUNA LIBERA DA PATIMENTO. [1]
Giacomo Leopardi

La parola catastrofe, viene utilizzata per la prima volta da Aristotele nel IX libro della Poetica per indicare una delle fasi nella struttura della tragedia. Viene descritta come un passaggio fondamentale per lo sviluppo della narrazione carico di negatività e tormento, che innesca la partecipazione emotiva del pubblico e conduce alla catarsi che la scena a provocato. Allo stesso modo nella modernità Racine la descrive come scioglimento di un nodo di forze antagoniste che bloccano l'azione teatrale. Sia nel teatro come nella realtà si ratta di un particolare evento, caratterizzato dalla una manifestazione violenta e improvvisa, destinato a produrre effetti di grande impatto. La catastrofe è un evento a temporale, che si verifica con continuità fin dalla notte dei tempi e che sfugge al controllo dell'uomo. Una catastrofe, anche se annunciata, è sempre un avvenimento improvviso e difficile da gestire e rappresenta la disgrazia, e al tempo stesso, la fortuna del genere umano. È proprio alla catastrofe che si deve la comparsa delle prime cellule complesse, la formazione di condizioni favorevoli alla vita sulla terra, l'evoluzione stessa del mondo, e delle specie che su di esso vivono. Tutto grazie ad una concatenazione di discontinuità, eventi imprevisti e spesso inspiegabili. Il concetto stesso di evoluzione è strettamente legato alla catastrofe e si genera a partire da un fattore fondamentale: l'instabilità. La catastrofe ha in sé una forza generatrice senza pari, e lo studio della morfogenesi biologica ha portato alla formulazione di una teoria delle catastrofi, per comprendere il significato di interruzione del continuo, rottura di un equilibrio morfologico e strutturale. La teoria delle catastrofi messa a punto dal matematico e filosofo francese Renè Thom negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta, rappresenta uno dei più recenti risultati della topologia riguardo l'interpre-

tazione dei fenomeni naturali. Le teorie di Thom furono fondamentali per osservare eventi caratterizzati da cambiamenti improvvisi causati da piccole alterazioni come i cambiamenti di fase, i movimenti tellurici, i cedimenti strutturali e perfino i crolli dei mercati finanziari.[2] Che si tratti di una catastrofe naturale o di una guerra, l'effetto che si verifica sembra essere sempre simile. Nell'immediato, il punto di discontinuità, pare essere fermo nel tempo, nei luoghi della catastrofe regna il silenzio e l'assenza. La rottura dell'ordine e il fattore disturbante, agiscono da elementi di regressione dell'uomo ad uno stato di pre-urbanizzazione in cui tutte le sovrastrutture umane sono state cancellate. Il disastro riporta a galla la condizione Rousseauiana del buon selvaggio sorpreso dalle forze della natura, o travolto dal suo stesso progresso. La terra trema, le città collassano e la catastrofe è l'occasione perché si attui inaspettatamente l'epifania della bestia sempiterna che dorme nell'uomo civilizzato. L'antropologia si è a lungo interrogata sugli effetti della catastrofe nell'uomo e nella società approdando alla formulazione di una vera e propria antropologia della catastrofe, in cui i metodi propri dell'antropologia socio-culturale vengono applicati allo studio delle catastrofi con lo scopo di comprenderne gli effetti prevenire e attenuare i danni post-impatto.[3] In questo caso la calamità viene interpretata come un momento estremamente critico prodotto dall'incontro improvviso di un evento distruttivo e di una determinata popolazione che viene investita da una profonda vulnerabilità fisica e sociale. Il disastro si compie quando si verifica una specifica interazione fra la sfera ambientale, tecnologica e sociale che innesca processi di connessione casuali fra eventi che si verificano in concatenazione culminando nella catastrofe vera e propria. La tabula rasa mette in discussione il concetto stesso di spazio generando crisi identitarie. Il fascino sublime della catastrofe insieme alla paura e all'istinto di conservazione fanno parte di un sistema ancestrale che ancora oggi è presente nella società e visibile nello spazio urbano. Il mondo dell'arte è stato testimone delle grandi distruzioni di cui l'uomo è stato autore e la memoria degli eventi rimane ben visibile nelle tele futuriste e nei componimenti dei poeti che hanno vissuto gli anni dei disastri recenti traendone riflessioni profonde sul ruolo dell'uomo nella società e nel mondo, mettendo in discussione le proprie origini e il proprio futuro. Nell'immediato, la catastrofe si associa all'annientamento fisico di

2_ Thom suggerì di impiegare la teoria topologica dei sistemi dinamici, avente la sua origine negli studi effettuati da Henri Poincaré, per modellare i mutamenti discontinui che si presentano con una certa frequenza nei fenomeni naturali, in particolare in biologia. Nel linguaggio matematico, una catastrofe è un punto critico (o stazionario, o singolare) degenere (o non regolare) di una superficie liscia (ovunque derivabile) definita in uno spazio euclideo di dimensioni n, in quanto a tali punti corrispondono biforcazioni radicali nel comportamento del sistema. Nel caso n=2, è facile mostrare che, per le curve lisce, si hanno solo tre tipi di punti critici, ossia i punti di massimo locale, minimo locale ed i punti di flesso. Mentre gli estremi locali rappresentano punti critici non degeneri, i flessi sono invece punti critici degeneri, e pertanto rappresentano altrettante catastrofi. R. Thom, Stabilità strutturale e morfogenesi. Saggio di una teoria generale dei modelli, Einaudi, 3ª ed, Milano, 1985

3_ G. Ligi, Antropologia dei disastri, Edizioni Laterza, 2009

ogni traccia architettonica e culturale. La catastrofe genera il vuoto, la tabula rasa e la rovina. Rappresenta il grado zero dello spazio e della pianificazione, come se fosse un foglio bianco dal quale è stato cancellato in maniera più o meno intensa ogni segno precedentemente tracciato. La catastrofe, inaspettatamente, crea le condizioni adatte per una nuova ripresa, un sottosuolo fertile per ricchi sviluppi culturali, economici e politici. La forza distruttrice di un evento, spesso diviene la fortuna di un luogo che grazie al cataclisma è stato investito da nuovi impulsi generativi che ne hanno cambiato il volto.

Alla catastrofe si associano spontaneamente parole come vuoto, rovina, macerie. Dopo ogni distruzione fisica appare il vuoto. Una dimensione spaziale dirompente. L'uomo contemporaneo non è più abituato alla percezione spaziale e sensoriale del vuoto. Il grado zero della catastrofe è la presa di coscienza di una forma urbana che nelle città è pressoché inesistente, ovvero lo spazio vuoto. Il vuoto diviene la rappresentazione istantanea del disastro, è il prodotto dell'imprevisto, uno sconvolgimento formale di grandi proporzioni. Ciò che rimane dopo che la catastrofe si è compiuta è la dimensione gigante di uno spazio anonimo in cui aleggia l'alone di ciò che prima era presente. Una condizione idealmente simile viene proposta dalle opere di artisti come Christo e Jeanne-Claude, che precludendo alla vista interi edifici o oggetti che fanno parte della città, ne dichiarano implicitamente un'assenza momentanea e provocano un passeggero straniamento favorito dall'impossibilità di riconoscere un luogo per mezzo delle componenti che ne hanno permesso l'identificazione fino a quel momento. A seguito dell'attentato dell'11 settembre del 2001 abbiamo acquisito una nuova percezione delle due torri data dalla loro non-presenza nello spazio. Raffinato è infatti il progetto di landscape disegnato da Snøhetta per il New World Trade Center contraddittoriamente basato sull'assenza. Il monumento ci porta a riflettere su tale diaconia. Il vuoto lasciato dalla catastrofe diviene dunque Kierkegaardiana possibilità infinita, vertigine della libertà. Una vertigine che nel mondo contemporaneo viene purtroppo e spesso avvertita come paresi decisionale, che porta alla a-critica riconferma di ciò che esisteva prima del disastro. Quando l'immagine del manufatto estinto è troppo ingombrante si generano casi come quello della ricostruzione del 1901 del campanile San Marco a Venezia. Invece, più è debole l'immagine del luogo, più

II_Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971-95

III_Christo e Janne-Claude, Wrapped Monument Vittorio Emanuele, Collage 1970

la sperimentazione ed una progettualità critica, senza considerare l'esito finale, possono essere portate avanti. Gibellina è completamente diversa da ciò che fu, Assisi non può che essere che se stessa. Il concorso internazionale per il piano di Berlino del 1958, esemplifica la tensione verso una modernità critica nelle proposte di Allison e Peter Smithson o di Le Corbusier, attraverso il rigetto dell'identità precedente al conflitto. Nella stessa Dresda dopo la guerra, e ancora di più dopo la riunificazione della Germania, molti sforzi sono stati fatti per ricostruire com'era prima del bombardamento. Nonostante tale volontà, buona parte del centro storico di Dresda è stato irrimediabilmente perduto e ampi spazi derivanti dalle demolizioni postbelliche sono stati saturati sino agli anni Ottanta dello scorso secolo da edifici nuovi. Alcuni importanti monumenti, anche grazie al reperimento di documentazioni d'archivio cartacee e fotografiche sono stati ricostruiti "com'erano e dov'erano" ma il processo di ricostruzione fu decisamente lento e parziale. Le bombe che colpirono Dresda influenzarono lo scrittore statunitense Kurt Vonnegut, che ne fece il tema centrale del suo più famoso romanzo. In *Mattatoio n.5* Vonnegut ricorda in questo modo il momento in cui, uscendo dal rifugio sotterraneo che gli aveva salvato la vita, scoprì con sgomento che l'intera Dresda, rasa al suolo, sembrava la superficie della luna: *"Dopo un massacro tutto dovrebbe tacere, e infatti tutto tace, sempre, tranne gli uccelli. E gli uccelli cosa dicono?"*.

Nel vuoto dell'incendio della Chicago bruciata del 1871 emergevano le macerie dei pochi edifici rimasti in piedi, qualche muro perimetrale, rare canne fumarie che si stagliavano qua e là contro il cielo ancora grigio di fumo. Sono i brandelli di una città ormai inesistente, non troppo diversi dalle macerie del terremoto di Gibellina o dello scenario apocalittico di Hiroshima dopo l'impatto con la bomba. Indipendentemente dalla natura della catastrofe, l'iter sembra sorprendentemente essere il medesimo partendo dall'improvvisa e brusca interruzione dell'esistenza e della vita della città, a cui segue l'annientamento della popolazione o la sua rapida dispersione, infine il piegarsi dell'habitat e il raggiungimento di una nuova entropia. Alla catastrofe segue la rovina, che può anche manifestarsi in qualche caso come la sottrazione di persone, di capitali, di risorse e di attività umane. Le rovine sono le indiscusse protagoniste dello spazio dopo il trauma, cenni di

IV_Fountain, World trade center memorial, 2012

una realtà che non esiste più, sono gli ultimi testimoni architettonici del disastro. La vista delle macerie ha da sempre suscitato nell'uomo diverse reazioni, e durante la storia il modo di percepire la rovina è cambiato di pari passo con l'evoluzione culturale della società, e se oggi associamo all'immagine della rovina un alto valore simbolico da preservare con la memoria, questa non è altro che una caratteristica piuttosto recente del nostro sentire. Per molto tempo la rovina è stata considerata nient'altro che una maceria priva di qualsiasi interesse, un elemento da eliminare per poter ricostruire. Ma è a partire dal XIV secolo che la sensibilità inizia a cambiare e grazie al pensiero preu-manistico la rovina (ovvero resti di templi, e architettura antecedente le invasioni barbariche), assume una prospettiva storicizzante e non è più semplice maceria, ma segno di un passato tramontato. Ed è nel XVIII secolo che la rovina diviene argomento privilegiato delle vedute pittoresche dei pittori romantici. La falsa rovina del giardino pittoresco diventa l'elemento chiave del paesaggio. La sua poesia e il suo valore superano addirittura l'interesse verso il soggetto di un'architettura in-tegra, più debole nel veicolare suggestioni e memorie. La dimensione evocativa della rovina è ormai artisticamente affermata e trova degna raffigurazione nelle pitture dei romantici tedeschi come L'abbazia nel querceto in cui Friedrich mostra le rovine di quella che un tempo fu una maestosa abbazia e in cui convivono sentimenti di pessimismo e speranza, confermando la modernità della sua concezione artistica.

Con l'avvento dell'epoca moderna la percezione filosofica legata alla rovina cambia ulteriormente e quando si parla di rovine non ci si riferi-sce più soltanto al periodo classico, ma anche e soprattutto alle rovine di epoca medioevale percepite non soltanto come eredità di un pas-sato perduto ma associate anche a profonde riflessioni sulla caducità e sul declino in una compenetrazione fra anima e forma. Le macerie divengono i caratteri fondamentali del paesaggio del poeta, rappre-sentano il dono maestoso dell'arte poetica che va in rovina, segnano il confine tra la civiltà e il mondo selvaggio, rappresentano quel fragile limite fra il progresso e oblio. E ancora, con l'avvento del XX secolo

V_L'Abbazia nel querceto, olio su tela, David Friedrich, realizzato tra il 1908 e il 1809

e l'affermarsi della cultura borghese le rovine si trasformano in luoghi di meravigliose metamorfosi e dal particolare interesse commerciale. I metodi industriali sono applicati universalmente a tutte le componenti della città e la rovina viene inclusa nel sistema: raggiunge il valore di attrattore turistico, diventa essa stessa un'economia considerevole fatta di restauri, mostre ed eventi. La rovina viene equiparata a spazio intermedio fra la realtà e l'immaginazione. Il ricordo di epoche passate è contaminato dalla manifestazione concreta del divenire non senza la distruzione e la corruzione del tempo che convivono in un monito perenne. E oggi? Quali sono le rovine del nostro tempo? Oggi le rovine sono più vicine a noi di quanto possiamo pensare, convivono in tutte le città e si mimetizzano nel caos urbano. Sono gli spazi dimenticati dalla vita della metropoli, pezzi obsoleti di città che vengono inghiottiti dalle dinamiche della natura. Le rovine proliferano nei vuoti progettuali delle città e non avendo nessun messaggio alto e nessuna memoria da rappresentare, vanno alla deriva come relitti, scarti della vorticosa trasformazione delle città.

La catastrofe è dunque un evento del tutto eccezionale che riscrive le pagine della storia e modifica il destino delle città. Coinvolge l'individuo, l'edificio, la città e il territorio in un crescendo che determina un mutamento inevitabile. Basti pensare alla devastazione eruttiva di un vulcano come il Vesuvio, in grado di radere al suolo intere città, e in alcuni casi, di cambiare profondamente la morfologia dei luoghi come accadde per esempio nel 1980 con l'esplosione del monte S. Helens nello stato di Washington. La storia delle città è costellata di tristi catastrofi naturali e si potrebbe pensare che l'uomo ne sia solo vittima e non artefice, che le sue responsabilità svaniscano dinanzi a forze distruttive di tale portata. La capacità umana di modificare il paesaggio è talmente influente che, specialmente in merito alle più recenti catastrofi naturali, si nota con chiarezza come gli interventi antropici siano stati determinanti nell'accrescere i danni della catastrofe naturale. L'incredibile densità delle megalopoli ha reso impermeabili sterminate aree fino a modificare l'intensità dei venti. Lo sprawl che ha accompagnato una pressoché assente coscienza ecologica dagli anni Sessanta fino alla fine degli anni Ottanta, sono stati la causa del peggioramento delle qualità della vita dei centri abitati che in molti casi non hanno

saputo adeguarsi alle necessità dettate dal clima. Negli anni Novanta le alluvioni che hanno colpito Los Angeles e le coste della California sono state caratterizzate da un'intensità mai vista prima, e tali fenomeni hanno spinto talvolta ad una progettazione urbana più attenta e rispettosa dell'ambiente in modo da minimizzare i danni della natura. La speranza è che, catastrofe dopo catastrofe, si giunga ad una progettazione responsabile che tenga da conto prima di tutto la sicurezza e gli equilibri della natura, prima del guadagno e della speculazione. Nuovi cataclismi vengono generati dalla presunzione dell'uomo di ergersi al di sopra della natura, proponendo sconsiderate strategie economiche e pericolose speculazioni. La portata di tali minacce arriva al punto da svincolarsi dalla scala dell'edificio e della città, investendo il territorio a scala regionale e portando dei mutamenti che sembrano impossibili da riparare. Disastri come quello del Vajont, o come quella in atto in Kazakistan, dove il prosciugamento del mare interno Aral si è compiuta con estrema rapidità, condizionano in modo irreversibile l'ambiente e le attività umane. A prosciugare il Lago d'Aral non è stato un evento naturale, ma la volontà sconsiderata dell'uomo di produrre guadagno a scapito di un ecosistema complesso e fragile che oggi è sparito per sempre. Catastrofi di tale portata fanno emergere enormi criticità sul modo di intervenire per riparare alla tragedia. Che fare dunque? Ripristinare una morfologia che non esiste più, o convivere con la nuova identità assecondando il processo che ha determinato la generazione di un non-luogo?

Il mondo antico mostra quanto sia significativo l'impatto del disastro sulla città. Troia, Gerico, Cartagine, ne sono tutti esempi emblematici. A quel tempo la distruzione fisica e lo stravolgimento dei confini erano operazioni militari frequenti, ma col passare del tempo le città si sono trasformate, hanno modificato i loro sistemi di difesa, con l'evolversi del mondo della guerra hanno continuamente cambiato i propri contorni. Nello studiare le catastrofi del passato, ci si accorge di come molti pericoli siano stati superati e non facciano più paura oggi. I disastri provocati dal fuoco e dagli incendi ci riportano ad un passato fragile in cui le città vivevano con la costante paura delle fiamme. Quanti furono gli agglomerati urbani, precari e sensibili al fuoco che scomparvero in passato? Le città sono state spesso accomunate dall'Araba Fenice, che risorge dalle sue ceneri. Dalla storiografia classica ci giungono le

VI_Quelle che una volta erano le sponde del Lago d'Aral

cronache del grande incendio che distrusse Roma nel 64 d.C. e diede inizio al rinnovamento e alla ricostruzione. Ugualmente, a distanza di secoli, il celebre incendio di Londra del 1666 ebbe enormi risvolti in campo culturale urbanistico e normativo, e furono sempre le fiamme a dare inizio alla inarrestabile crescita di Chicago dopo il 1871 che vide la comparsa dei grattacieli.

La natura con i suoi disastri ha avuto una grande responsabilità nel plasmare le città e ha provocato le catastrofi più significative che hanno pian piano modificato il pianeta sul quale viviamo. Terremoti, incendi ed eruzioni vulcaniche hanno lasciato il segno nella memoria collettiva e perdurano ancora oggi attraverso le forme in cui si sono evolute l'architettura e la città. I segni di un passato traumatico sono spesso ben visibili anche quando la catastrofe è ormai lontana nel tempo. Allo stesso modo le cicatrici lasciate dalle guerre hanno determinato numerose novità in campo urbanistico e architettonico contribuendo a plasmare le città che oggi tutti conosciamo. Le guerre sono la manifestazione violenta di logiche politiche ed economiche che culminano nella brutalità della distruzione fisica, tristi e famosi episodi che lasciano indelebili cicatrici. I conflitti, nonostante la innegabile negatività che essi rappresentano, sono stati in grado di produrre i più grandi progressi e innovazioni in campo tecnologico della storia. In un eterno ritorno di distruzione e ricostruzione, le città si sono evolute nella forma e nella gestione delle proprie risorse. L'evoluzione dei sistemi di difesa ha dovuto adeguarsi alle nuove tecnologie e a nuovi modi di condurre le guerre, spesso dimostrandosi inefficaci come testimoniato dal bombardamento di Copenhagen del 1807da parte della marina britannica che rase al suolo la cittadella fortificata e una vasta area della città. Il Novecento ha visto tali distruzioni amplificate fino a livelli mai raggiunti prima, attraverso uno smisurato progresso tecnologico dell'industria bellica. Le nuove tecniche di guerra totale rappresentano il nuovo pericolo e rendono le città vulnerabili. L'immane potenziale distruttivo della guerra moderna è stato ampiamente dimostrato dai bombardamenti che colpirono Dresda, Amburgo, Tokio e Berlino nell'ultima fase della guerra. L'impiego della bomba atomica completò lo scenario di vulnerabilità mostrando che da quel momento la distruzione istantanea di intere città era possibile. L'elenco dei luoghi di-

strutti durante la seconda guerra mondiale è purtroppo estremamente esteso e Hiroshima e Nagasaki sono l'esemplificazione dell'annienta-mento totale, della tabula rasa. Gli esiti della guerra sono paragonabili a quelli di un forte terremoto o di un incendio, ma ciò che li distingue è la volontà che sottende la distruzione che l'uomo ha adoperato per cancellare e annientare volutamente la cultura e le radici di altri popoli. La bestialità e l'istintività inquinano l'evento fisico della distruzione e rendono più dolorosa la ricostruzione. Eppure, anche da tali tragedie si sono sviluppati fervidi dibattiti culturali, concorsi e strategie al fine di cogliere le opportunità della ricostruzione, al di là del valore intrinseco delle proposte.

Dalla tabula rasa si giunge velocemente alle opportunità e ai fallimenti della ricostruzione. intenti di rinnovamento e progetti, giusti o ingenui che fossero, sono sempre maturati a seguito di tali occasioni e si im-pongono con forza nella creazione del nuovo orizzonte catastrofico. Nascono profonde riflessioni sulla natura e sul perché di tali avveni-menti, ed è proprio in quel momento che dalle macerie tornano a fio-rire l'utopia e visioni del futuro che si configurano come potenti forze di trasformazione e nuova identificazione. Tendenze in contrasto con i caratteri di un pensiero utopico caro al diciannovesimo e ventesi-mo secolo che voleva edificare nuove città abbandonando le vecchie. Eppure già secoli prima si è assistito all'abbandono di intere città, come successe in occasione del terribile terremoto della val di Noto nel 1693. Noto antica, rimase un cumulo di macerie poco distante dalla nuova città che venne ricostruita con raffinatezza. La riedifica-zione fisica, culturale e ideologica nei luoghi della catastrofe portano a nuova vita. Spesso la ricostruzione è un evento problematico ma ricco di innovazione tipologica, culturale ed ideologica che cambia i conno-tati del pre-catastrofe riformulando una nuova identità degli spazi e nuove attività per gli uomini. Attraverso l'atto catartico della catastrofe si recupera il senso eroico della costruzione, che forgia una nuova corrispondenza e identità fra luoghi e individui spesso animata da un sentimento di forte riscatto e rivalsa nei confronti dell'offesa subita. La crisi generata dalla catastrofe rappresenta, per l'appunto, un momen-to fertile per la germinazione della sperimentazione. La ricostruzione non ha però sempre esiti felici, e talvolta una poco attenta program-mazione e progettazione determinano catastrofi nelle catastrofi, luo-

ghi ambigui e non risolti reiterano il disastro creando una nuova serie situazioni instabili e problematiche a cui è difficile trovare soluzione. Le prese di posizione successiva ad un cataclisma possono essere genericamente ricondotte a due vie di intervento: uno che tende ad una riconferma dell'identità sfrgiata dal cataclisma che comporta una volontà identitaria restauratrice, e quella del balzo in avanti, di uno streßen che costituisce la ricerca di una nuova ragion d'essere di un luogo. Sta all'uomo, e più in particolare all'architetto, saper cogliere le innumerevoli opportunità date dal disastro senza incappare nella tragedia dell'amplificazione del danno. Le contraddizioni delle ricostruzioni contemporanee hanno spesso manifestato la crisi della città di oggi. L'incapacità di poter fare ricerca ontologica sul luogo mette in crisi le capacità dell'architettura di fare città. Lo smarrimento della scala umana, ed il rifugio nella restaurazione di identità passate mettono a nudo tali contraddizioni. Heiddegger nella conclusione di Essere e tempo affermava l'impossibilità di fare gnoseologia e di poter parlare dell'Essere. Che sia divenuta una prassi ormai diffusa del nostro fare città? il proliferare del "Junkspace" di cui parla Koolhaas potrebbe esserne una prova. Le grandi metropoli contemporanee ci parlano delle difficoltà date dallo smarrimento della scala umana, dell'identità fra individuo e spazio. Ed ecco che ripristinare il passato sembra il modo più facile e sicuro per mettere le coscienze a posto. È emblematico il caso della città dell'Aquila, che nel nome del ripristino sta annientando la sua identità. La celebre "zona rossa" è oggi un grande vuoto urbano, dove la vita della città è del tutto assente. Sempre ad opera di un terremoto la città di Lisbona venne distrutta nel 1755 e la riedificazione che seguì fu fortemente volta alla sicurezza antisismica della città. il dibattito culturale e filosofico europeo ebbe grande stimolo a causa della risonanza che il ebbe il cataclisma. François-Marie Arouet, "Voltaire", nel 1755 aveva sessantun anni ed era già un uomo di esperienza che aveva affrontato situazioni difficili a causa del suo pensiero che andava contro le credenze settecentesche in Francia. Nonostante tutto la la tragedia di Lisbona lo colpì profondamente, e scrisse quasi d'impulso un Poema sul disastro di Lisbona, carico di critiche verso la cultura e la filosofia prevalenti, e in particolare quella dell'ottimismo religioso di cui parlava Leibniz nella Teodicea. L'ottimismo contro cui si scaglia Voltaire propugnava l'assioma secondo cui "tutto è bene"

e che l'umanità vive nel migliore dei modi possibili. Voltaire si chiede come sia possibile definire così un mondo in cui accadono tragedie come quella di Lisbona. E si chiede ancor di più come mai proprio Lisbona e non altre città, contestando anche una certa letteratura delle catastrofi naturali come punizioni divine. Le osservazioni di Voltaire diedero inizio ad una disputa filosofica, scientifica oltre che politica destinata ad avere un grande influenza sull'approccio alla religione, sull'uomo e sul rapporto con la natura. Questa riflessione coinvolse i maggiori pensatori del tempo come Jean-Jacques Rosseau, Immanuel Kant, e Giacomo Leopardi con il suo Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese.

Le città hanno conosciuto la distruzione ad opera delle fiamme dei terremoti e delle guerre ma ciò che sembra reiterarsi nel tempo è la loro rinascita nonostante la totale devastazione. Questa incredibile capacità nell'affrontare la tabula rasa porta a riflettere che in fondo la vita delle città dipenda soprattutto da una sorta di immortalità collettiva che risiede nella cultura dei popoli e nella storia dei luoghi piuttosto che nell'invulnerabilità fisica e materiale delle architetture. Considerando questo punto di vista appare ovvio che la distruzione materiale sia solo una condizione temporanea e che la città intesa come linfa vitale costituita dalla sedimentazione culturale tornerà a riappropriarsi dello spazio. La distruzione totale della città avviene quando oltre all'annientamento fisico, si verifica anche una dispersione culturale tale da smembrare quel sistema di valori condivisi che tiene legato un popolo, che crea l'identità di una società. In quel caso tra le macerie è difficile intravedere un futuro. Come dimenticare il disastro di Chernobyl e le città fantasma nate dopo l'allarme. Pripjat è divenuta una città carcassa, dal giorno successivo all'evacuazione avvenuta il 27 aprile del 1986, la città è rimasta come congelata nel tempo. In questo caso non è stato distrutto nessun edificio, e la catastrofe è stata determinata dall'estinzione degli abitanti e l'improvvisa cessazione delle attività che rendevano Pripjat una città viva. Edifici vuoti collassano sotto il peso del tempo e la natura si riappropria inesorabile degli spazi che le erano stati sottratti. La città si decompone pian piano come un organismo vivente senza alcuna possibilità di rifiorire. Si è parlato di distruzione immateriale, di vuoto e di stasi di un luogo dove non vi sarà alcuna ricostruzione. la città cessa di esistere nel momento

in cui l'individuo cessa di essere nello spazio. Ma quello che è stasi apparente, non è in realtà così immobile come sembra. Nonostante la drammaticità del non potere ripopolare Pripjat, la città abbandonata è divenuta lo sfondo per l'attività di creativi che trovano particolarmente interessanti i luoghi segnati dalla catastrofe nucleare. La città in rovina è diventata luogo adatto per la realizzazione di opere di land-art e istallazioni artistiche. Agenzie di viaggi organizzano visite guidate fra le rovine e recentemente è stata anche ambientazione e soggetto di un film che rievoca la catastrofe.[4]

il ruolo dei media e della comunicazione nella storia delle catastrofi recenti è stato fondamentale al fine della diffusione dei dibattiti successivi. A partire dalle incisioni, passando dalla pittura fino alla carta stampata, ai video in diretta tv e ai social network, il mezzo con cui la catastrofe viene diffusa ha avuto un ruolo fondamentale nel coinvolgimento e nella partecipazione immediata e su larga scala. La risonanza mediatica e l'iconicità del cataclisma sono state incredibilmente amplificate attraverso la velocità dei media contemporanei. Il primo evento catastrofico moderno (per risonanza mediatica), può essere considerato il terremoto di Messina e Reggio del 1908. Tutta l'Europa venne mossa a compassione ed informata della strage per mezzo della stampa. Chi dimenticherà il crollo in diretta tv della crociera della Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi nel sisma del 1997? E come potrà scomparire dalla memoria l'impatto e il crollo delle Twin Towers nel 2001 che tenne incollati agli schermi milioni di persone nel mondo?

La storia della vita delle città è un racconto nel quale spesso prendono posto titanici tentativi di cambiamento, che muovono enormi flussi di risorse e di denaro. Si continua a combattere la forza della natura addomesticando dei luoghi o ricomponendo dei frammenti di essi, non tenendo conto di delicati equilibri che una volta spezzati potrebbero non venir mai più ricomposti. Le città cercano di opporsi alla catastrofe che inesorabile spazza via le tracce antropiche dal territorio. L'uomo, nello spettro infinito di potenzialità date dal grado zero della catastrofe, è sempre stato scisso fra la buona riuscita della costruzione di nuove identità e l'ombra del fallimento. Tutte queste visioni, tutti questi progetti, si rivelano come grandi ingenue sconfitte, o come grandi e irripetibili successi.

VII_Murales sugli edifici abbandonati di Pripjat, 2011

4_ Chernobyl Diaries, diretto da Bradley Parker, Basato sul romanzo The Diary of Lawson Oxford di Oren Peli. della Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi, 1997

VIII_Crollo della Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi, 1997

DISASTER AND INNOVATION

CHICAGO AND THE BIG FIRE 1871

"LA TRAGEDIA E LA POESIA CONVIVONO IN UN PRODOTTO CHE NASCE DALL'IMPERSO-NALITÀ DI UN SISTEMA E CHE IN ESSO SI IDENTIFICA TOTALMENTE. IN REALTÀ LA SELVA DEI GRATTACIELI DEL LOOP È LA SCENA DI UNA TRASFORMAZIONE STORICA CHE SOLO LETTERARIAMENTE POSSIAMO ACCETTARE DI DEFINIRE COME "TRAGEDIA": IN ESSA VA PIUTTOSTO LETTO IL RISULTATO DELLO SCONTRO FRA L' "IMMENSITÀ SCHIACCIANTE" DELL'ORGANIZZAZIONE CAPITALISTICA […] E I SOGGETTI UMANI, ATTORI SPODESTATI DA UNA VICENDA CHE NE DOMINA SPIETATAMENTE I COMPORTAMENTI"[5]

Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co

5_ M. Tafuri, F. Dal Co, *Architettura Contemporanea*, Vol 1, Milano 1979, p56

It's strange to think that a disaster could determine the success and progress of a city. The potential of the disaster in some way seem to reside in the proportions of the destruction itself. An apparent contradiction that is nevertheless effective in the case of Chicago, which was hit by one of the biggest fires of modernity.

What happened in Chicago between 800 and 900, was one of the most fascinating transformations that gave rise to the challenge of architecture in height, a topical challenge for more than a century that last until today enriched by other meanings. The catastrophe in this case was a key element to outline the profile of the Chicago we know today. The city has been protagonist, in just 70 years, of strong change phenomena that involved the economic and financial structure and physiognomy of the city itself with a transition from wood to metal. For a decade, Chicago became the first city in the United States thanks to many favourable conditions that have ensured the development such as the absence of architectural tradition to which refer to. It is processed in a fully expressive architectural language of context reality, which exceeds the strict separation between engineering and architecture that was clearly manifest in Europe.

Factors that led to Chicago in less than 70 years, from 1832 to 1900, being at that time the most important city of the United States are almost exclusively economic, supported by the results of a catastrophic event that allowed a new capitalist development. The new attitude

coincides with a new way of interpreting the project. The traditional project (as is the case in European cities) intended as a systematic convergence of knowledge projected over time to govern the morphology of the development, does not belong to the American attitude, at least up to the 900. The capitalist growth is the rule that dictates the development of the city. No one is interested in knowing what will be the shape of the city in the future, but all bets, and invest in its development, writing an inescapable destiny.

"Il modello a scacchiera, ideato dagli spagnoli nel '500 per tracciare le nuove città dell'America centrale e meridionale, è applicato dagli inglesi e dai francesi nel '600 e nel '700 per la colonizzazione dell'America settentrionale. La nuova cultura scientifica considera questa griglia come uno strumento generale, applicabile in qualsiasi scala: per disegnare una città, per scompartire un terreno agricolo, per segnare i confini di uno stato".[6]

6_ L. Benevolo, *Storia della città*, Laterza, Bari, 1975, p.639

Between the end of '700 and early '800 much of the Great Lakes region was covered by forests, inhabited by tribes of the Potawatomi Indians. In 1784, a man from Quebec built a hut on the north bank of the river which the Indians used to call "*Checaugou*".[7] In 1803, a fort called Dearborn was built by the U.S. Army, on the south bank of the river, but was soon destroyed by Indians in 1812. Rebuilt the fort, was slowly formed a village that, with businessmen, hunters and garrison, counted 350 inhabitants in 1833.[8] According to tradition, colonial isolates and lots surrounding the village drew an orthogonal grid, with a clear functional division of ownership of land, with the implicit scientific ideal in the decision of Thomas Jefferson to draw borders and divide the land of the new states following a sub-grid of meridians and parallels in a universally valid network transferred to orography.

7_ J. F. Swenson, *Chicagoua/Chicago: The Origin, Meaning, and Etymology of a Place Name*. Illinois Historical Journal 84 (4), 1991; p 235–248

8_ A. T. Andreas; *History of Chicago,* Arno Press, New York 1884, p.111

Economic development, and the raised population size had transformed the village into the metropolis in just seventy years. This change was possible thanks to the timber trade provided by forests, from the meat processing and the development of transports networks. After the seizure of Indian lands, in 1836, the design of a navigable canal was planned, that would connect Lake Michigan with the Illinois River, a tributary of the Mississippi, allowing communications between Chi-

cago and the great prairies. This meant the opening of a huge market for wood, which at that time was carried mainly through waterways. Chicago seemed destined to take in few years the role of exchange pole in a communications system at a continental scale. In 1836 the number of inhabitants had increased tenfold, reaching 4000 units. The price of building lots rised 300 times more compared to nine years before, reaching nearly 100,000 $. The 1837 economic crisis shifted the completion of the project in 1848, when the first railway line was brought into operation, (an element on which Chicago built his fortune.) Inhabitants increased to 30,000 in 1850, and 334000 in 1871, transforming the village into a great city.[9] The canal construction and the quantitative development methods show that there was no consideration related to a prior check of the urban settlement life quality until 1871, when the great fire that wiped out the urban structure developed until then.

9_ A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 38-42

Development and project did not work synergically. The city was growing extending the checkerboard pattern, that was pragmatic but indifferent to morphological and functional relationships. In the early 30s the industry begun to produce steel nails, and thanks to the low costs, they were used in large quantities in the construction of wooden houses, that were realized until that moment with traditional carpenters techniques. These new structures were realized by assembling wooden planks nailed together with standardized measures, allowing a series production ease in the assemblage even for a non-specialized person, and speed in the realization. The huge development of Chicago, as in other cities of the United States, has been possible thanks to the spread of the balloon-frame structures that allowed a rapid urban development, impossible with masonry buildings. A technical innovation interprets and promotes the continuous change of scale. The timber industry, fueled by the large amount of forests, made the growth of the constructive knowledge possible in a constantly expanding application. The balloon-frame structure of the buildings, according to a logic that rationalizes the industrial use of wood as a building material, was functional to an unplanned growth: the prefabrication cut costs, could be placed in any point on the board, even allowing changes in the existing full-empty relation: the relative lightness of the wooden

structures and the absence of foundations allowed during the 50s and 60s to lift and move the buildings to build the first sewer system and increase and sections of roads.

The negative aspects of the industrial Chicago in the second half of the nineteenth century resemble those of other big industrial cities grew between the 700 and the first half of 800 with a much higher growth rate. The rail network grew by acquiring stations and terminals. The local transport network was extended, the port was adapted to the new requirements, markets, slaughterhouses and industries were increasing due to economic growth. At this early stage of development the residential areas, especially that of the lower classes, are not far from industrial plants, and are localized according to actual needs, in a mixture that the board was not more able to order and it encouraged the property fragmentation as a system that does not provide any form of public scrutiny. In the mid-fifties the construction of the first sewer system started. It was a hard work to implement the sandy nature of the soil. Buildings were literally raised and moved to widen the roads. Within few years, the work was completed and although the buildings were still the same, the city took a different appearance. In 1867, the State Street[10] was enlarged, and on that occasion buildings were replaced too. The transformation of the city was huge: the metropolis of wood became a modern megalopolis, that would be changed again after the great fire.

10_ A. Pacyga, Chicago: A Biography, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 60

In 1871, the destructive force of the fire literally reduced Chicago to ash. The disaster began for a fatality and spread rapidly and randomly in an unexpected way. Everything begun in the O'Leary property near Dekoven Street. The building that caught fire was made of wood and was used as a barn and stables. The fires were not a novelty in a city like Chicago. The Big Fire found favourable conditions for its propagation in the wind that was blowing towards north-west and in the drought that struck the town during summer. The not timely intervention of firemen caused the growth in the size of the fire involving soon a huge number of buildings. The first report received by the firemen was completely ignored. The first interventions to stem the flames were unsuccessful because of the strong wind that was feeding the fire. The proportions of the fire became so alarming that the

IX_ A district after the fire, 1871

mayor of Chicago asked for help nearby cities. The rush of the flames was unstoppable and the fire became to be too vast to be contained. The situation turned to be even more dramatic when fire destroyed a part of the aqueduct. At that moment the police resigned and ceased to try to extinguish the flames. The Big Fire continued to expand until crossing the river too. Lost all hope of salvation, the city was placed under martial law. Most of the people sought refuge in the direction where the river was wider crossing it and reaching the other shore. But this was not enough, and flames jumped over the river starting to burn even the opposite bank. Slowly winds ceased and the fire weakened until it turned off three days after the first alert. The disaster was huge. The fire reduced to ashes about two-thirds of the city, destroying the entire centre (the so-called Loop). More than 120 km of roads, 190 km of sidewalks, streetlights in 2000, 17500 buildings and 222 million dollars of property (about a third of the value of the entire city) were destroyed.[11] The tabula rasa caused by the fire constituted a privileged condition for the reconstruction, because the city had not to consider any pre-existing architecture, that brought the freedom for architects during the years of reconstruction. The Big Fire destroyed about 800 hectares, near the entire city of Chicago of the time. It was a destruction of significant proportions which left standing only some rare building as the Nixon Building. It seems paradoxical, but the great fire of 1871 has been a crucial incentive for the development of Chicago and a necessary condition for its transformation into a modern city. The Big Fire started a modern development based on capitalism.

The growth of Chicago till that time was not much different from other American cities. In addition to the same building material, it had also similar trends in terms of style and composition. Buildings were about three or four stories high and they were inspired by a strong Eclectic culture easily recognizable even in Europe. The reconstruction of the city has deeply marked the American architectural debate, in which designers were still fruitlessly debating the most appropriate use of stylistic elements available by historicism and eclecticism of academic matrix. Chicago, thanks to its advantageous geographical location, at the time was already a focal point of the American trade system. The great fire of 1871 threatened to nip this economic deve-
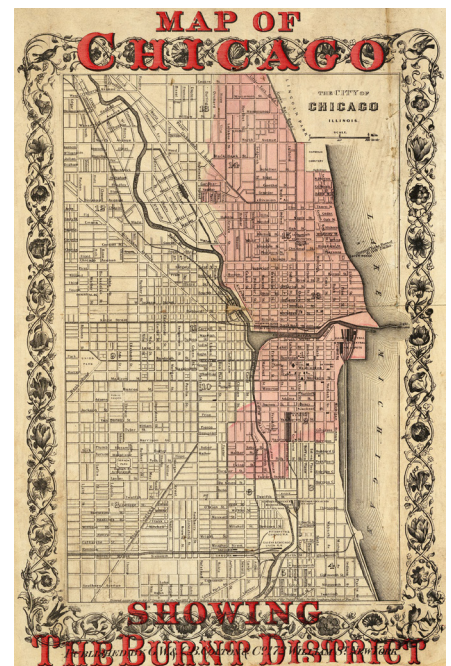
X_ Map showing the burnt district in Chicago, 1871. Courtesy Library of Congress

11_ Data from Chicago History Museum

lopment. Between 1880 and 1910, there was a period in which the reconstruction proceeded slowly, probably due to the fear for new fires. However, after initial hesitation, from 1880 a frantic race to the reconstruction started. Fear is almost entirely disappeared, although it remains an architectural element to remember the fire violence and destruction, clearly exhibited in external fire escapes. After the void left by the fire, it becomes urgent to create a new urban centre so that the activities, especially the commerce, could be back to the role of primary importance that they had before the tragedy. After a faltering recovery that initially sees the reconstruction of the wooden city, the business centre started to grow in height using new techniques: structural steel grid, pushed up the achievement of a greater degree hitherto pursued to the horizontal level on the ground. However, Chicago continued to be a city made mainly by small wooden houses with balloon-frame structure, a vast expanse that only grows in height towards the center.

XI_ Ruins after te Big Fire, 1871

The rapid reconstruction provoked a radical change in the American tradition. Simultaneously with the construction of wooden single-family units, appeared the first houses for apartments. They could be rented and were responding more effectively to the changing needs of the industrial society in dynamic and rapidly expansion according to the logic of speculation. The need to build tall buildings comes mainly from a economic reason concerning an optimized use of the lots. The construction of skyscraper was possible thanks to a series of constructive innovations and improvements. First, the use of the metal structure, which allowed the opening of large windows and the adoption of new types of foundations, necessary ecause of the particular nature of the soil. And there would not have been any skyscraper if there were not adequate systems needed to make faster, and cheaper, communications and movements, such as telephone, pneumatic mail and lift, which was presented for the first time in the steam version designed by engineer Otis at the International Exposition of 1853. If the speculators, therefore, have contributed to some of the most interesting examples of architecture of the last years of the nineteenth century, it is to highlight also another fundamental fact about the development of Chicago: the birth of the company, the modern architecture

XII_ Ruined Chicago, Loop, 1871

studio, in which, due to the complexity of the problems to be solved, architect and engineer had to work breaking down the clear separation of powers. The fire made possible the birth of a new way of thinking the city. It contributed also to shape the world of the architectural profession as we know it today.

The intense dynamic that determines the constant changes in the set-up, pushes in the direction of a more radical change, and the fire becomes a necessary condition for a new development. The impetus given by the functional reorganization of the Loop, the increased value of the soil, the availability of capital from insurance companies, the reorganization of business structures and new construction technologies contributed to the speed of the new economic growth. The resulting organizational changes in production and its management demanded new forms of urban space. Even after the destruction caused by the fire, the grid pattern was maintained. The geometric layout of lots is not simply an abstract design superimposed over a territory, but the concrete form of land ownership that continues to be the two-dimensional morphological structure of the new metropolis.

In a short time the Loop, economic heart of the city, becomes the place for experimenting modernity. The skyline with the first skyscrapers began to characterize the urban landscape and the city was equipped with technical facilities that were necessary for a million inhabitants city in a regional scale. Since 1890 there was an electrified tram network, adapted to the requirements of a growing demand for mobility. That contributed to break the traditional bond of closeness between residence and places of work, encouraging the expansion of the suburbs of single-family houses. Begun in 1890, the causeway increased the speed of the transports and then decreased the temporal dimension of the city, a necessary condition to its growth. The development observed after the tabula rasa left by the flames, do not find similar examples in the European scenario. That kind of development would not have been able to appear in any way in the Old Continent because of its strong historical stratification. In combination with massive upgrading of the sewerage system in 1880 were realized public parks (2,000 acres), the first nucleus of the green system that today is one of the structural elements of the urban area.[12] The utopia of beauty
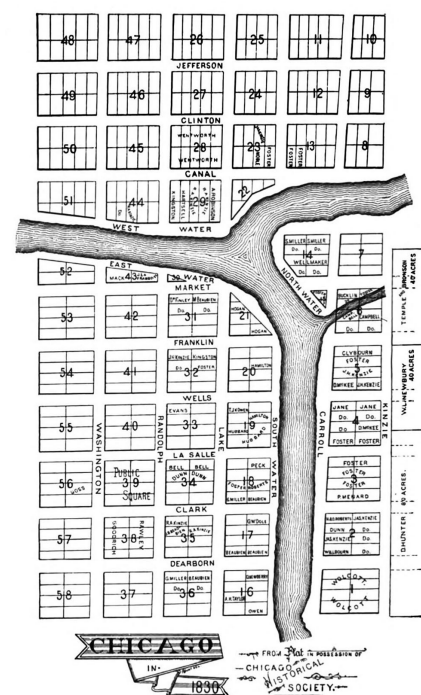
XIII_ Original map of Chicago by James Thompson, 1830. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

12_ W. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1991

then move as part of the pursuit of profit, thanks to the action of the ruling class in Chicago during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

"After 1880 the business center of the city became the perfect image of the audacity of America in dealing directly with his problems. The rapid growth of this great center led to a sudden expansion of its necessity. To address them, the pressure grew to employ new constructive potential that until then had been exploited only in bridges and industrial buildings of various types."[13]

13_ S. Giedion; Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a new tradition, Cambridge (Mass.) 1941 (trad. it. Spazio tempo e architettura, lo sviluppo di una nuova tradizione, Hoepli, Milano 1954)

The photographs of the devastation caused by the Great Fire of 1871, compared with those that show the first achievements of the Chicago School, represent two very different worlds, as if the fire had consumed the sacrifice on the altar of the first city for the new economic growth. The devastation of the fire made lots available for a total renovation of buildings, necessary to face the new market. The new conditions given by new materials push architects to give shape to new building types that use the constructive and communicative potential of steel structure in satisfying the demand for working spaces for the tertiary sector. The new structures showed their modernity concerning efficiency, good lighting, and the ability to ensure a more profitable relationship between ground and surface area. Electricity and steel frame made possible to "challenge the sky" optimizing the vertical development of communication and inside movements.

Chicago's architects of the late nineteenth century have thus addressed, to an appropriate scale to modern times, the subject of the construction of the city as art work. They build transforming necessity into art, projecting the beauty of the individual building to the scale of the city. The sum of the individual unit produces one unit of a larger scale, now evident in the appearance of the Loop compared with that of the rest of the city. On one hand, the operating conditions have helped to unify the typological characteristics of the first high-rise office, identifiable as pieces of historical category, on the other hand the heterogeneity of the cultural background of designers promoted the expression of different languages. The new "commercial style", which exceeded

the dichotomy between engineering and architecture by proposing the composition of the facade as a grid that reflects the structure of the building, meets the favour of employers as responsive to the functional and economical needs. The new architecture confronts with the perplexity of a public opinion which often confuse architecture with the ornament, and was not prepared for the dematerialization and transparency of the building, distrusting of buildings of which the static behaviour was not understood.

Even before the Big Fire, tall building were seen as a concrete reality common to major North American cities, as evidenced by the first terminologies that were relate to tall buildings: elevator building, skyward building, sky-buildings, among which was the most lucky term was skyscraper.[14] Some tall buildings in Chicago appeared even before the 1871 fire. The new tall buildings that exceeded ten stories avail themselves of a premise fundamental technique as the metal framework. These new technologies were studied (at least since the early nineteenth century) in England and perfected in the United States during the mid-century.[15] And also, did not remain unnoticed the novelty appeared at the World's Fair in New York in 1853, where there were shown new architectures such as the Crystal Palace, erected few years before in London, which was the result of trials and studies conducted by Joseph Paxton and John Loudon in the design of greenhouses.

The major technical innovation emerged in the context American as a result of the Big Fire, essential for the rapid spread of new building systems, was the improvement of fireproofing systems of structures.[16] There was a huge experimentation of fire protection devices, such as the system proposed by Peter B. Wight, William Drake and Sanford Loring, consisting of a terracotta protection which provided an adequate level of safety and low costs. The problem of fire-fighting is tackled by George H. Johnson, an expert of the firm Badger, and E. Baumann, with the successful book A Theory of Isolated Pier Foundations (1873), that gave a crucial contribution to the solution of problems concerning the skyscrapers foundations. Meanwhile, before the composite structures of steel and masonry, then iron and steel cage replaced most backward technologies, allowing the solution of

14_ A. De Magistris, *High-Rise, percorsi nella storia dell'architettura e dell'urbanistica del XIX e del XX secolo attraverso la dimensione verticale;* UTET, Torino, 2004: "Building Skyward". <<Record and Guide>>, 31 (20 January 1883)

15_ James Bogardus, Cast Iron Building: Their Construction and Advantages (1856): In this text we see already an advanced study of new technologies of steel for the construction of tall buildings.p.28; Sky-Building in New York, Bulidings News, 45 (7 September 1883), p.363-364

16_ The fireproof protections were studied during this period by George H. Johnson, designer for the US Warehousing Company. In: A. De Magistris, High-Rise, percorsi nella storia dell'architettura e dell'urbanistica del XIX e del XX secolo attraverso la dimensione verticale; UTET, Torino, 2004, p13

complex structural problems.

The dominant elements of the new metropolis were defined in the short span of a few decades with the reconstruction of the Loop, after the great fire of 1871. Between 1880 and 1890 the cost of a quarter of an acre in the Loop went from $ 130,000 to $ 900,000; in the mid-1800s Chicago was already regarded as a center of trade and manufacturing of great importance, with about thirty thousand inhabitants. The population increased up to three hundred thousand inhabitants in 1870, five hundred thousand ten years later, more than a million in 1890, and two million at the threshold of the twentieth century.[17]

In Chicago, from 1870 to 1920 there was a huge influx due to the extraordinary development. Due to that reason, a large amount of new workers came to Chicago, in large part from the European continent.[18] After the fire, the old city ceases to be an isolated bridgehead drive towards the border. Its geographical location, the rich infrastructural system, the concentration and the development of industrial activities quickly lead Chicago to embody an alternative role compared to the other large urban concentrations and European cities. His impetuous economic development is accompanied by massive human migration, violent processes of redistribution of social classes in the metropolitan area, and the explosion of cruel contradictions. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Chicago experienced violent class clashes which call for a renovation of the productive and institutional apparatuses, dramatically accelerated by the crisis of 1893.[19] As a result of this massive development and reorganization of capitalist dynamics, making use of zoning ordinances subsequent to 1871, a big intervention transformed the face of the Loop: a perfectly defined area, served since 1897 by an efficient elevated trainline, emblematic image the concentration of the tertiary specialization.

The expulsion of the residence from the Loop and the expansion of social mobility between the concentric layers around the shopping area, make available a defined area with a high potential. The new aggressive entrepreneurial class initiates speculative unprecedented explosion and the formation of new financial and real estate concentrations. Building holding companies were set up, managing the operations forming the loop, since the 80s. It was the creation of a business center on a national scale. This situation, as well as the deepening of technologi-

17_ A. Pacyga, Chicago: A Biography, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 77-87

18_ It is estimated the influx of about twenty million people. "As a consequence of the high demographic rate the population grew with exponential rate, resulting in a proportional increase in the demand for goods and creating a market of vast proportions, trigger for further industrial development in the twentieth century.": G. Denti, Chicago 1871-1992, dal grande incendio al concorso per il Chicago Tribune, Alinea Editrice, Firenze 1987, p12

19_ A. Pacyga, Chicago: A Biography, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 149

XIV_ Elevated trainline in Chicago, 1897. Courtesy Library of Congress

cal research and the refinement of the architectural solutions, ensured that the fortunes of the loop coincide with those of the skyscraper. The French novelist Paul Bourget describes the essential features of the boom in Chicago, in his book Outre-Mer (1895):

"There is so little whim and fancy in these monuments and in these streets, that they appear the work of some impersonal force, unconscious as a force of nature in the service of which man has never been than an docile instrument. this is the expression of the overwhelming immensity of modern commerce that gives to the city a sense of tragedy, and in my opinion, of poetry." [20]

"Tragedy" and "poetry" live together in a product that was born in an impersonal system, and that it is totally identified in it. The forest of skyscrapers in the Loop is the scene of a historic transformation that we can only accept and literally define as "tragedy": it is rather to be read as the result of the clash between the immensity overwhelming capitalist organization, which is modifying passing from the old forms of entrepreneurship to the individual impersonal power of the great trusts, and human subjects, dispossessed actors of a story that dominates ruthlessly behaviours. The architectural culture reflects this occasion, and that "tragedy" in a piercing way. The classical definition, which brought together architects active in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, under the lowest common denominator of the Chicago School, irreparably flattens the complexity, the contradictions, the multiplicity of answers provided in this unique situation. While, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish carefully the various attitudes that characterized the architects active in Chicago, on the other hand there is the need to resize the epic, assessing the architectural achievements in the light of research carried out in another explosive environment, such as New York.

Rapidly appear the need to build a number of commercial buildings and to coin a new typological language. Some new buildings appear on the scene such as the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1885-1887) that shows a new approach regarding the use of classical references, sporting a rusticated texture and imposing facades. Sullivan called it *"a triumphant culmination expression of the big sacralized commercial*

20_ P. Bourget, Outre-Mer, Notes sur l'Amerique, Alphonse Lemerre Editeur, Paris, 1895

building, a monument to the business, the spirit of the organized trade, power and progress of time, energy and resources of individuality and strength of character."[21]

The commercial building was divided according to a strict symmetrical layout marked following its hierarchies, which were adapted on the basis of functional requirements given by the organization of the commercial store. Ancient and modern somehow mingled, we can find the stone arch but also the metal frame entablature. The exterior was formed by freestanding septa in sandstone laying on the granite basement, a clear reference to an old classic. The tabula rasa caused by the fire and the cancellation of the buildings prior to 1871, culminated in the architectural ferment of the Chicago School that fills the skyline of Chicago with new architectures translating the needs of the new capitalistic society.

Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), during the years of frantic development of Chicago, has been trying to give to American architecture an independent identity, far from the European tradition. Despite having worked a little, and only occasionally in Chicago, has contributed to the clotting of favourable cultural conditions to the experience of the School. Moving between the culture of the pioneers and the demand for new types by entrepreneurs from the U.S., Richardson retrieves some independent values of architecture, such as the construction and compositional clarity of forms, finding in the Romanesque Revival a starting point of architectural language through which propose an American independent architecture identity. The Romanesque, known in Europe during Richardson's stay at the Academie des Beaux Arts in Paris, allows the exaltation of volume, mass, and the language of the material as raw materials of the building, on which a new tradition has it's base. The Marshall Field stores (1885-1887) are the most important achievement of Richardson in Chicago, in a cultural climate that had benefited from the devastation of the fire and had become favourable to the new commercial architecture. The building tradition and innovation of steel structures coexist giving rise to the contamination of a skeleton in an iron and a stone exterior bearing wall. The proportion governs the relationship between the parties: Richardson experiences the value composition of overlapping series by ordering them

quantitatively with a taste for the catalog of the architectural elements.

"The skinny volumetric plants, the broad phrasing of the openings, the linearity of the string courses that contend to the bare walls any idea of heaviness, cornices ironed, pictorial and not plastic comment surfaces, the absence of ornamentation, explain the cultural earthquake resulted in capital of the Middle West. Richardson filed in Chicago a text whose modernity undermined the eclecticism, inducing radical revisions"[22]

The Glessner House, built a few years earlier on the Prairie Av, had stunned the audience for his clear anti-decorative clarity, and, was conceived as a introverted fortress with an internal courtyard protected from the street. The ability of the Romanesque Revival to give an interpretation at the scale of architectural object, is linked to the innovative drive in the new dimension to the city's subway fully tested by Richardson, whose cultural legacy is grafted onto the irrepressible experience of the Chicago School. The arch and the wall, the materials as part of a poetic, the concept of decoration in the right place by Richardson scale ratio as a complement to the architectural definition, were the foundations of global set of architectural problems, that constitute a more true heritage together with the total dedication to architecture that Richardson left to American architects, freeing architecture through the past. If the Romanesque Revival has been the cultural reference of a generation of American architects, the intuition of the aesthetic virtues of the new technologies has provided the tool to shape the image of the new measure of urban spaces and the tertiary born after the ashes of the Big Fire.

At the turn of the century, William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907) perfectly embodies the character of one of the many components of the "Commercial Style" in Chicago. In his study he formed the major exponents of Chicago after 90: Sullivan, Burnham, Holabird, Roche. The role of his study, of his writings and of his teaching at the University of Michigan, make Jenney's contribution very complex and decisive too, though often ambiguous in terms of language. Uninterested in formal problems, Jenney, experiences a neo-Gothic repertoire in some of his early works, reaching a general eclecticism. Organizing rational-

22_ B. Zevi, Storia dell'Architettura Moderna, Einaudi, Torino, 1975 pp.289-290

ly the design work, he focuses primarily on technological issues. The structural research, conducted empirically and experimentally, became the protagonist of the whole process.

"The principle of supporting the entire building on a metal frame carefully balanced, made rigid and protected from fire, is due to the work of William Le Baron Jenney. No one preceded him, and he deserves all the credit that comes from this feat of engineering that he was the first to perform".[23]
Leonardo Benevolo

Jenney can be considered a bridge between the eclectic tradition and modernity; he played unflinchingly the American pragmatism, finalizing the technical innovation to meet the demand of the new entrepreneurs looking for a relationship between structural solution and image of the building. In this way he laid the foundations for a change in the collective taste. His commitment shows one of the cultural heritage that can be traced back to the fire of 1871. The catastrophe generates a complex process that involves the study and development of the architectural structure, which stripped the building from its formal contradictions and works beautifully on the structure and the coating. The ruins looked like x-rays, and allowed to see the structural hierarchies which survived the flames in pure forms. The attitude of the architecture profoundly influenced by technology and new possibilities focuses its efforts on the single building with an almost sculptural tendency imposing it in the space and governing only the scale of the building. Jenney in his works express a clear typological nudity.

One of his first buildings, the Portland Block (1872) is a reference in the Chicago devastated by the Great Fire. But is the First Leiter Building (1879) which fully reveals the attitude of Jenney. The Leiter Building (1879) projects into the clear rhythm of the brick fire-fighting pillars of the facade, the skeleton structure made of cast iron which forms the framework of the building. The coating is no longer a constant facing, but it opens with large tripartite windows that flood the interior with light announcing a trend that will become the rule of the new generation of designers. The First Leiter Building turns into a triumph of typological research: the reduction to pure structure makes an

23_ L. Benevolo, Storia dell'Architettura Moderna, Laterza, Bari, 1960, p.308
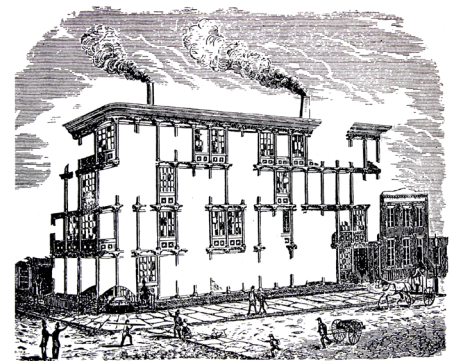
XV_Project for a builing in with higligh on cast iron's resistance.

infinite reproduction possible, paving the way for identification of the typology within the urban morphology. The Jenney's Home Insurance Building (1883-1886) is remembered in history as the first "modern skyscraper", especially referring to the use of a steel cage. The steel skeleton does not affect the composition of the casing, in which Renaissance motifs engage on a Romanesque Revival base. *"The skyscraper becomes the conceptual place where there is the problem of the technical construction of the building as a coincidence with the type of building itself"* (Crotti).

If the First Leiter Building shows classic quotes in the basement, every classical reference disappears into the Second Leiter Building (1889-1891) where the naked cage is shown with astonishing frankness. The few classic quotes become secondary to the unity of the whole building.[24] The structure as main element of the composition and the fire-proofing research, remained always present after the Big Fire of 1871 and become the matrix of the new style. Many of these formal solutions will be refined by Holabird and Roche's Tacoma Building. The complete overcoming of historicist influences in commercial buildings took place after checking in practice the impossibility to optimize costs and functional efficiency with the stylistic forms of eclecticism. The technique of assembly projects onto the vertical surface the "open" urban layout: a force field randomly aggregated is the frame of multifarious events. The road to the solution of many problems implicit in the new theme of the skyscraper is now open.

There is an element, however, that the experimentation of Jenney did not identify: the need to formulate a specific reference to encode standards. This requirement is interpreted by John A. Holabird (1886-1945) and Martin Roche (1855-1927), while in New York parallel research in this direction will be carried out by George B. Post. The skyscraper, even in its most radical formulations, remains an isolated element, an event full of many possibilities. Unfortunately his interview with the urban system is entirely mediated, for the most part conventional. These limits will weigh on the entire American research until the '30s. The skyscraper's era sees in Chicago and New York the trial of a new architectural object that comes in a multitude of forms according to the personal interpretation of the architect. There is a real investigation of the potential of a building typology that has no precedent nor in Ame-

XVI_ First Leiter Building, 1879

24_ L. Benevolo, Storia dell'Architettura Moderna, Laterza, Bari,1960, p.308

XVII_Home Insurance Building, 1885

rica nor in the European tradition. William Holabird and Martin Roche were two great interpreters of the quality research in the field of standard repetition. Towards the end of the 80s Holabird and Roche had already pointed out the characteristics of a type based on compliance with the requirements of ventilation and lighting, on the exhibition of the structural grid, giving rise to continuous variations on a consolidated theme, creating buildings that are never trivial and with an high quality level. The city had grown by adding blocks to other blocks. In the same way of the city, also the buildings of Holabird and Roche are "open works", but expandable vertically and horizontally with a simple addiction, that is what actually happened in some cases, even years later by repeating the basic module. The two architects, expanding the Monadnock Building, interpreted the research of Root in the key of modular scanning. The Marquette Building (1895) can be considered the culmination of this research. The decorative accentuation of the ground floor and the entrance, the serial repetition of the windows of Chicago, the cornice at the top that closes the composition, will be encoded by Louis Sullivan as elements that characterize the appearance of the high building for offices.

The contribution of Holabird and Roche is clear if we compare it with the work of two of the most important arcitects of Chicago: Daniel H. Burnham and John W. Root. Together, they synthesize the two components of the new professional American reality: on one hand Burnham, organizer of the work, a tireless promoter, realistic until cynicism, with a fervent entrepreneurial mindset, whose considerable skills as a designer were too often overlooked; on the other hand, Root, aimed to give body to the Richardsonian romance within the new commercial types in a search of architectural quality that can integrate to rationalism, absorbed by Semper and Viollet-le-Duc by architects such as Renwick and Snook, an "organic" ideology of Darwinist origin. The collaboration between the two began in 1873: after the schematic Grannis Block (1880-1881) and the Montauk Building (1881-1882), they reachtheir first remarkable results with the Insurance Exchange Building (1884-1885), and especially with the McCormick Building (1884-1886). Root, in an article in The Inland Architect , speaks about its buildings as *"noble and durable monuments to the beneficial age of commerce"*.

The logic of the post-disaster reconstruction after the vacuum, led to a rapid densification of the urban fabric in the commercial and economic centre of the city. Each batch of the grid was carefully filled in order to exploit the soil in the best way possible. The context and the shape of the city are elements that often escape to the design. The growth of the city does not seem to take into account the problems associated with the densification and the fragmentation of the lots. The public space and the square, which is so important in Europe, are swallowed up by the new urban system and the building itself . The Rookery Building (1886), central work of Burnham and Root, is hailed as a masterpiece by contemporaries. Still, it is a very contradictory building: with its role as a fortress, it "defends" the city, while inside, the lobby space (partially transformed by Wright) is freed from the dominion of the joint walls, and explodes in the lightness of a refined iron structures. In this way the building introduces a new relationship between building interiors and urban morphology. The lobby becomes a public space in his proper sense: it is the space of social meetings, rejected by the logics of the city, that hides itself inside the building. The private enterprise transforms the skyscraper in a "city within the city". The space of social gatherings, rejected by the speculative logic of the city, took refuge within the single building. The entrance on the street level becomes in fact a vast glass atrium with two or three floors with stairs like a luxurious interior courtyard. Nothing better than Art Institute (1885-1887) or the Commerce Building (1885-1886) testifies the ambiguity of a position unable to overcome the lesson of Richardson. The desperate defense of the uniqueness of the skyscraper, its uniqueness, concluded when the decline of the romantic attitude begins towards the new professional tasks. The Argyle Apartments (1886-1887), the Masonic Temple (1889-1891) immediately anticipate the work that marks a turning point in the production of Burnham and Root: The Monadnock Building (1889-1992). It is a masonry building and it is through the adoption of a traditional technology that reaches its organic structural unsurpassed essentiality: the building is identified with the city that wants to bea part of it. The case of the Monadnock Building (1889-1991) is exemplary, as Root had "*archaically shaped in the tapered profiles an Egyptian pylon*"[25]   This image expresses the absolute value of the primordial form, the static image of the building,

perhaps as a response to public concerns raised by the apparent fragility of the new commercial buildings. The abstract archetypal eco, memory of the Monadnock Building, in which the absence of decoration is perhaps due to an intervention of Burnham, shows an area just scanned from cornices, rippled by the bow-windows, and subtly modulated by the coating bricks which structures the mass.

This is, once again, the result of an extreme world, of a technique, of an attitude at sunset, certainly far from the road taken by Burnham after the death of Root; how demonstrates Reliance Building, lacking in the volumetric cohesion of Monadnock, adopting a constant modulus, reiterated in height.

Burnham work was following a different path. The skyscraper, "moving away from architecture", tends to dive in the urban agglomeration appearing as a neutral fragment: the "quality" of architecture as to manifest itself as a memory or as a rhetorical quote. The object of the comparison is no longer the monument to the trade, but the overall challenge of the city. The central theme of the work of Burnham is now, in fact, the urban form, its leading role in new "conquests". His buildings, such as Marshall Field Store (1902), the Heyworth Building (1903), and above all, the Flatiron Building (New York, 1902), are treated equally, characters and functions are dictated by the urban structure. The Flatiron, on a triangular area pointing towards the mid-Manhattan, is an architectural fragment of an ideal plan of "conquest" of the city, while the First National Bank (Hutchinson, 1911) or the Butler Brothers Warehouse (Chicago, 1913) are about to disappear into anonymity of the lot. The architecture becomes an available tool for the city.

In natural world, the ash of a fire creates a layer of fertile soil, and this was also the case in Chicago where the flames of 1871 have created a favourable situation not from the architectural point of view only, but also regarding the business world. As often happens, after a dramatic event, we are witnessing the birth of synergies, new dynamics that are able to involve several professionals who take advantage from the new entropy after the disaster. In Chicago in the last decades of the nineteenth century the major professional firms were formed by a couple formed by an architect, accompanied by a businessman (in the case of Burnham) or a technician (as Adler), allowing the exploitation of the new technical and aesthetic virtuality.

The fire determined the absence of existing architectural relevant features in a region that was already far from the formal constraints of Europe. The new buildings are chased in height and manifested themselves as independent architectural entities as if they were generated by the same ashes that had wiped out the city of wood before foundation. The skyscrapers, completely free in their formal and stylistic expression, are also entangled in the geometric pattern of the division of soil and standardization of forms of a kind design that is adapting to the scale of the economical demand. Against this, the romantic trend of the Chicago School was fighting an exhausting battle, from which the figure of Louis H. Sullivan (1856-1924) emerges gratified by a halo of heroism. Critics have traditionally placed the work of Sullivan at the centre of a tradition that stretches from Richardson to Frank Lloyd Wright, and which would lead to the genuine values of the "organic thought": the metropolis is seen as unnatural chaos, which contrasts with the Nature. Undoubtedly, the extraordinary quality of Suilivan's architecture exorcises the indifference and the alienation of urban relationships. But the myth built around its isolation is the result of what Sullivan himself, with the late Autobiography of an idea (1922-1923), wanted to celebrate subtracting his own stories from the fate of a historic defeat. Given such complexity, his theoretical and typological contributions have to be considered with particular attention, in the light of research that we have followed so far. In 1879, Sullivan began to work with Dankmar Adler (1844-1900), an architect who had already provided substantial evidence with the First National Bank (1872) and the Central Music Hall (1879). The first works of the two, as the Borden Block (1875-1880), refers directly to the experience of Jenney. Only with the Auditorium Building (1886-89) there was a turning point: the envelope in this case, coordinates disparate functions, adopting a solution that makes use of the tripartite typology defined by Post and enhanced by Richardson, while the decorative repertoire, especially in the dining and in concert halls, introduces an epic aura in a building that meets the cultural aspirations of the new gentry of Chicago. The structure enveloping the hall of the Auditorium, also dominated by repeated arches devoid of any structural value, is a hymn to the vital forces of the modern metropolis, as reflected in a highly symbolic space. We get to the choice of the Romanesque Revival after discar-

ding more elaborate solutions, probably inspired by recent buildings of John Root, to meet the needs of the Auditorium Association. The commercial according to Sullivan seemed to be not appropriate for the countenance of an important urban institution, while the Romanesque Revival guaranteed the recognizability of the auditorium, as compared to containers of tertiary that was a distinctive element of the urban landscape. Richardson's influence is recognizable in the compactness of the volume and the exact connection of large blocks of stone, however, exceeded in the simplification of the surfaces and in the search for a verticality that unifies the plans. In the scenario of the emerging tertiary cities, dominated by single-strand modularity of the new type of high office building, the Auditorium emphasizes its nature as a collective institution evoking the image of the public medieval palace, as an icon in the urban community. The establishment, as a symbolic form, makes possible the recognition of the particular physiognomy for the new inhabitants of the metropolitan city. The city of pioneers is now an old memory, dissolved in the smoke of the fire of 1871.

In the '90s Sullivan focused its interest on the idea of an organic autogenesis of things, which he interprets as a universal required condition, with a strong ideological character. *"The idea of a body, which involves the organization of the structure of a goal to achieve or a role to play, it was not a new idea, and gavev rise to two conflicting interpretations: a mechanistic and vital view".* The decoration is understood as a culmination of a process that develops from simple shapes in an ornamental triumph. Sullivan intention of the decoration must revive the architectural organisms, but the idea of organicism does not invest the spatial composition of the building, as it will happen with Wright.

26_ A. Bush-Brown , Louis Sullivan, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1961, p.22

In the years 1887-1895 Sullivan made three exceptional skyscrapers, such as the Wainwright Building (St. Louis, 1890-1891), the Union Trust-Building (St. Louis, 1892-1893), and the Guaranty Building (Buffalo, 1894-1895). The first two adopt the model of the Produce Exchange, and the U typology of the Union Trust incorporates the model of the Mills Building, but the ability of reinterpretation of Sullivan is completely original and, above all, he has the amazing ability to integrate to structures a naturalistic decorative repertoire. Sullivan assimilates its effort to fight for the restoration of individual rights, opposed to the massification of the subject. But the values of Sullivan appear

26_ A. Bush-Brown , Louis Sullivan, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1961, p.22

inevitably exceeded; even if it's thanks to them that, with the project of the Fraternity Temple (1891), he faces the problem of a global control of the overall shape of the metropolitan centers, anticipating the characteristic problems of the next century. This research, however, has a marginal importance. After 1895, Sullivan ended the collaboration with Adler. With Elmslie, Sullivan realizes the Carson Pirie Scott Store (1899), the last of his major urban projects. The terms of the sullivanian equation, structure and plastic narrative are dramatically split: two floors at the level of the base for commercial use are immersed in a decorative cast iron, while the volume is reduced to geometric bands of windows. The angular semi-cylindrical element , is moreover, autonomous as a urban hub in the proper sense; the exaggerated naturalism of the decoration enhances the relationship between the universe of goods and the city; above it, the world of labour is summarized in the rarefied geometrism of horizontal windows. The two souls of the metropolis are reflected without mediations in the dichotomy of architectural forms. After 1900, the reaserch for Sullivan finds its place outside the city; his relationship with Chicago is definitely out. The love-hate relationship with the Loop is broken. Others, henceforth, will be the tools that will shape the development of the metropolis, and the nature of its quality will also be different. The final confrontation between the two souls of Chicago's architecture had already found its realization. In 1893, with the construction of the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago emerged as the cultural center in a national scale. The Fair is a hymn to the fate of the new expansionist metropolis and its seemingly unstoppable race that began from the rubble of the Big Fire; it represents its assertion. Burnham's organizational skills are the only guarantee for the coexistence of so diverse architects such as McKim, Mead & White, George Post, Peabody and Stearns, Solon S. Beman, Van Brunt and Hove, Le Baron Jenney, Adler and Sullivan, Richard M. Hunt. Solon Beman is the only Chicago's architect who is granted to be present to the monumental Fair. The majority of the central buildings are in fact, entrusted to the architects of the East. But the real star of the Fair is Charles B. Atwood (1849-1895), who is the only one able to replace the casing of wooden slats in a building designed to last like the Fine Arts Building. Frank D. Millet coordinates the complex setting of the White City, and the rigid axial structure is useful to organize the

various architectures, highlighting the Manufactures Building by Post, and the Administration Building by Hunt.

To Sullivan and Adler is given the design of the Transportation Building. The building is located in an abnormal way in the scenic parade of the Fair; the golden door, the entrance of reiterated arches that introduces to the building is the symbol of a quality that is no longer relevant if compared to the complex operation that the universal Kitsch plays, and it is testimony of the pathetic and emotionally touching, of an out of date world. Quite different is the meaning of the Exposition compared to the extreme recall to the quality and dignity proposed by Sullivan. In Autobiography of an idea, he will resume his charges with the Fair: "so the architecture died in the country of freedom and courage." But the values that Sullivan chases are impotent ideology in a world that wants to celebrate another epic. The Fair makes that masterpieces that they tried to mark the evolution of the tertiary metropolis totally out of date. The new aura of the White City has no country nor time; its essence coincides with consumption. The Fair consumes everything, trivializes any formal effort in absurd games of buildings and open spaces entertaining the visitors. Everything is mixed and everything disappears. It is a painful goodbye to the old world tradition. A dramatic wave that comes from the mighty metropolis overwhelming the Fair, deleting all previous efforts, becoming the only protagonist. The Americans, who discovers their own role and power, breaking down the solid certainties that had guided the architects, in the 70s and 90s, in their subjective battle. While the Fair is opening, the economic crisis shakes heavily the society, and changes the capitalist organization of the country, but it does destroy the spirit of "frontier" and conquest. The imperial vocation of America is destined to reproduce itself in different shapes and forms . The myth of subjective promotion is no longer functional to its success. Now there is the need of an audience that is loyal to the rhythms of the metropolis, which reproduce those idea of the movement of goods, able to recognize themselves as a social unitary body in the universe of its own products. An united, amassed, audience that is to be offered timeless monuments, values without a country, symbols of a perennial stability. The "old quality" is now part of history: it is part of values in which neither the universe of goods, or the power that presides over it, nor the audience can no longer be re-

XVIII_ Chicago International Exposition, 1893

cognized. The Chicago reborn from the flames of the great fire in a few decades rides the wave of modernity exporting the model of the new avant-garde city in the world. From the tabula rasa we came to the birth of the skyscraper in a mad rush animated by ambition, facilitated by technological progress and economic growth, coordinated by a ruling class that well embodied the American dream of bigness above all. The city is witness of a tragedy that erased most of its buildings, and has been redesigned dangerously freely by the force of prosperity and greatness, from the vertigo of the vacuum and its infinite potential. The new model of the skyscraper city was born, spread rapidly, and at a distance of more than a century, is still trendy.
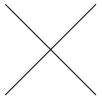
"LA GUERRA È LA SINTESI CULMINANTE E PERFETTA DEL PROGRESSO (VELOCITÀ AGGRESSIVA SEMPLIFICAZIONE VIOLENTA DEGLI SFORZI VERSO IL BENESSERE)" [27]

"LA GUERRA È BELLA PERCHÉ CREA NUOVA ARCHITETTURA, COME QUELLA DEI GRANDI SERBATOI, LE FORMAZIONI GEOMETRICHE DI VOLO, LE SPIRALI DI FUMO PROVENIENTI DAI VILLAGGI CHE BRUCIANO…" [28]

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

27_ F. T. Marinetti, Guerra sola igiene del mondo, Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia, Milano, 1915

28_ F. T. Marinetti, Poema africano della divisione "28 ottobre", Mondadori, Milano 1937

We cannot talk about catastrophe without taking into account the responsibilities that human has had in proposing the destruction through wars and revolutions. War, and especially last century conflicts, were able to change the landscape and cities with effects never seen before, with a power equal to that of earthquakes and fires. War, "*perfect synthesis of progress*" as described by Marinetti, had an undisputed role in the evolution of architecture and towns, even in the new way of conceiving the territory. War is synonymous of destruction, but also inevitably of progress. From the fortified cities to air raid shelters of last century, the transformation of the art of war have always been involved in the field of architecture; but architecture is a victim itself: entire cities have been destroid, boundaries have been altered the and thousands of buildings were razed to the ground; but on the other hand, the architecture has inherited a lot from wars. Not without huge losses war have also meant research, experimentation, development and progress.

A traumatic event can change the culture of the places in the short or long term and the First World War was undoubtedly a crucial moment on an international scale. The extent of its impact and its characteristics have led to a great migration of people, and have laid the foundations of the twentieth century, technologically and culturally. Other wars before 1914 may be considered global, like the Seven Years' War

(1756-1763), the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815), but none has had so profound and lasting effects in time as events that occurred between 1914 and 1918. The First World War led to the political events of extraordinary importance: it was the period of the destruction of the great empires (the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Tsarist in Russia and the Ottoman Empire) and radically changings in the way we think about the war and the city in a modern perception. It is essential to think about the First World War as a necessary and essential step for the future development and for political and economic changes of the 900 who remain in different forms even today. It is impossible to think about World War II without considering the contribution of World War I.

It is equally impossible to think about the appearance and shape of the city in which we live today without taking account of the upheavals brought by wars and revolutions. It is obvious that, in addition to immediate changes caused by contingent decisions, we should take into account the structural trends of history with a broad temporal perspective to see the contribution that the war was accelerating, or braking, the changes that would probably occurred in time. The most visible changes in the long term, are mostly visible in the defeated nations, occupied or born after the war. Victorious nations have often shown less willingness to change.[29]

The evolution of the world of war has brought substantial changes in terms of employment of the population, the development of architectures and logical management of the conflict itself. The introduction of new weapons was a pivotal event around which the productive forces turn their profile and defense techniques has increased the research and experimentation in the field of technology and architecture. Among these we remember toxic gas used for the first time during the Second Battle of Ypres on the Western Front fought between April and May 1915, or the introduction of the tank in 1916,[30] the bombers, submarines and the atomic bomb.

The First World War rather than disrupt the matrix of transformation in which was the architecture, had an opposite effect, accelerating modernization. Even before the conflict, the architecture expressed a certain admiration for the aesthetic aspects of technology related

29_ I. F. W. Beckett; La prima Guerra Mondiale, Dodicipuntidisvolta; Einaudieditore, 2013, (Intro).

30_ I. F. W. Beckett; Op. cit, p 9, 18

to the world of weapons.[31] The onset of war sparked intense cultural debates that had previously swarmed during years of peace. The mobilization of the population also involved artists and architects. In Italy some members of the Futurist movement took an active part in the Lombardo Volontari Ciclisti e Automobilisti.[32] Initially, the participation of architects saw them engaged exclusively on the battle field. The experience of the trench was fundamental in the formation of the new architects generation. This is demonstrated by the sketches of Erich Mendelson, who drew suggestions related to the dynamism of the industry during the period spent in Russian front. Another type of involvement of architects and artists consisted in the realization of the camouflage devices that turned to be indispensable. The architects were also asked to take part to the construction of defense equipment, like walls, and other elements that till that moment were exclusive of army. The hangar[33] in particular, was a novelty in the field of architecture.

There was a massive involvement of workers in the war system, motivated by the total character that the war had soon taken. The industrial setting of the phenomenon required specific types of infrastructure and new industries, but also new residential neighborhoods for the workforce.

Architects took advantage to carry out their research that began in the years before the war. The First World War was responsible for a substantial change in the way of perceiving the conflict marking a strong discontinuity between tradition and modernity. The cinema industry appeared before the war, but its potential in the field of propaganda was not exploited.[34]

The World War I, represents a time of transition from which emerges a large number of news involving politics, socio-economic development of nations, borders, military and new cultural realities. The way in which the first modern war shaped, the second world war was clearly a continuation of developments already underway. One of the examples of the architectural response to the need of that period was the Garden City of Staaken, built near the munitions factory in West Berlin, with a typical architectural style from the eighteenth century. Schmitthener organized residences into five standardized elements such as doors and windows.[35] From the production of weapons until the construction of residences for workers, everywhere was applied the indu-

31_ The German warships were often a source of interest of members of the Deutscher Werkbunt – J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012

32_ Because of the war Umberto Boccioni died in 1916 after falling from a horse and Antonio Sant'Elia was killed the same year – J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012

33_ Auguste Perret designed hangar for aircraft and dirigibles in concrete and steel, while Eugene Freyssinet built a hangar at Istres in Avord in1916-1917– J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012

34_ I. F. W. Beckett: "La première del primo vero documentario, The Battle of the Somme, nel luglio del 1916, fece sensazione. Inoltre creò un'immagine potente e indimentica- bile della guerra sul fronte occidentale, che da quel momento ha lasciato un'impronta indelebile sulla coscienza collettiva." In: I. F. W. Beckett; La prima Guerra Mondiale, Dodici punti di svolta; Einaudi editore, 2013, intro.

35_ K. Kiem; Die Gardtensadt Staaken als Prototyp der modernen deutschen Siedlung; in V. Mangano Lampugnani, R. Schneider; Moderne architecture in Deutschland 1900-1950, Reform und Tradition; Gerd Hatjie, Stoccarda, 1992

strial model that allowed to administer effectively the mobility of large flows of people and goods. Military operations and industry required continuous transformations not only in buildings, but also regarding vast areas of territory. Transformations that changed the way we design hitherto known.

It is often thought that the First World War was a static war of trenches, but the technical innovations in the field of aviation were seminal in upsetting the military tactics and reversing the naval hegemony that had protected England till that moment. The flight and Air Force were born in those years. It was the beginning of an era dominated by speed and attacks were even more aggressive and destructive during the second world war. In Brescia in 1909 was held the first aviation meeting and the event also influenced the art world: Franz Kafka published an article about that event, and Gabriele D'Annunzio was clearly inspired by aviation in his future compositions. The Futurist movement was profoundly influenced by the role assumed by Aviation. One relevant representation of the importance of the discoverings in the field of aviation were well displayed in the so called aeropittura, a declination of futurism painting which emerged in the years following the First World War. Many artists including Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), Osvaldo Peruzzi (1907-2014), Giulio D' Anna (1908-1978), Tullio Crali (1910-2000) were deeply fascinated by the myth of the machine and the characteristic of modernity Marinetti's movement, which reached its peak in the enthusiasm for the flight, in the dynamism and speed of the airplane.

It may seem strange, but the tests of the air warfare lays its foundations at the time of the French Revolution in which the first experiments were conducted with balloons and for the first time the attack from above appeared.[36] About half a century later, the Austrian army used the balloons for a rudimentary bombing.[37] The size of the air war was re-evaluated in 1903, and the effectiveness of airships to transport the armaments began to be considered a potentially effective instrument for offensive. In Italy, a royal decree of January 7th 1915, and then a law in 1917, established the orpo Aeronautico Militare which, along with the Ispettorato Sommergibili e Aviazione was formalized in 1916 as part of Stato Maggiore della Marina.[38] Even in Italy the interest was initially almost exclusively reserved for airships. Only from 1908

XIX_TullioCrali, *Incuneandosi nell'abitato,* 1939

36_ P. Banet-Rivet; L'Aéronautique; L. Henry May, Parigi 1898, p247-251. Cit. in T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 8

37_ H. Kronberger; Le bombardement strategique; Rocher, Monaco 1996, p 21. Cit in T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 9

38_ G. Lazzati, Stormi d'Italia: storia dell'aviazione militare italiana, Mursia, 1975, p 12

onwards international attention shifted to the so-called *"havier than air"*[39] (proper aircraft). The years between 1908 and 1910 were important for the development of aeronautics and all the major nations began to form the first Army aviation sectors and to conduct personal research. The *"zeppelin fever"* arrived in Germany in 1908. That was the year of the first flight with a dirigible which covered a distance of 350 km.[40] In 1910, for the Libyan war, Italy built nine airships and ten airplanes and the number of aircraft grew in a few years. The airships had already been tested before 1910, and they were preferred to the aircraft because of their low costs in production, the flight speed and maneuverability. The first man who dropped a bomb from an airplane was an Italian, Giulio Gavanotti. In November 1911 he bombed Libya, and opened a new chapter in the history of warfare.[41]

The birth of aviation was an event that involved all the most powerful nations and at the same time born a new architectural typology for the storage of aircrafts. The hangar became the symbol of the new conquest of the air. One of the major consequences of the flight discovery was a substantial change in the perception of the borders, the UK was no longer an island and could no longer rely on the protection that the Channel had provided up to that time.[42]

"The air around London and other large cities will be darkened by the flight of airplanes [...] they are not mere dreamers who Hold That the time is at hand When air power will be an important thing even blackberries than sea power." [43]
Azar Gat

Thus began the fear of sky, and in June of 1917 London was destroyed for the first time by an airstrike. The war had conquered the sky and this event had deep influences in the field of architecture is planning. Quickly the perception of the city and the value of boundaries changed. It is one of the most influential episodes of the twentieth century hat, not only has profoundly changed the dynamics of attack and defense, but he also pushed the city toward a modernization. The air plane brought the birth of new buildings typology with new features unknown until then. Through the use of the aircraft for military purposes soon there was a worldwide diffusion of airplanes and the birth of

39_ T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 51

40_ In September 1909, in Italy was established the Brigata Specialisti del Genio dedicated to aviation and recognized as autonomous military units; in T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 53

41_ T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 2, 54.

42_ Daily Mail: "England is no more an island, there will be no sleeping safely behind the wooden walls of England with the Chanel our safety moat", in P. Painlevé, E. Borel; L'aviation; Felix Alcan, Parigi 1911, p174. Cit in T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 2, 60

43_ A. Gat; A History of Military Thought From the Enlightenment to the Cold War; Oxford Univ Press 2002, p 573. Cit. in T. Hippler; Bombing the People. Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy 1884-1939, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p 61
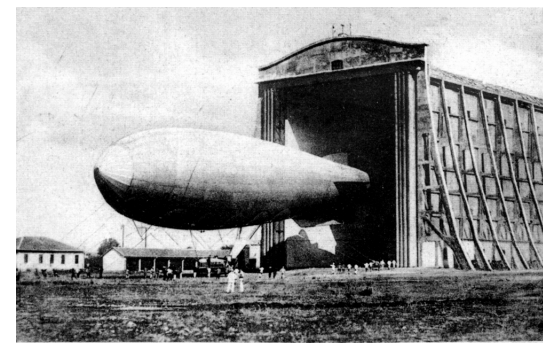
XX_ Hangar dirigibili Augusta, 1917

civil aviation which marks a real turning point in terms of mobility and halves the geographical and cultural distance between the places of the world. At the end of the war, between 1920 and 1930 appeared the first regular services for civilians transport of. The first passenger flight took place on February 5th 1919, operated by the German company Deutsche Luft-Reederei. Then the French Farman did the his first flight from Paris to London.[44] In 1926 was the time for the birth of the Lufthansa, the first company that operated night flights. From the early twenties many other airlines conquered the sky (such as KLM in 1920, the Pan Am in 1927 and Ala Lictoria in 1934)[45] affirming the supremacy of human over the air. Airlines became a status symbol of modernity. In addition to the aircraft, airport became the undisputed protagonist. From the hangar of the First World War we get to facilities capable of handling large number of people. The airport became the symbol of modern cities. In Vancouver, in 1905 was built the first airport, a vanguard of the century, who served until 1911 as a mooring point for airships. The first airport that housed planes was built in 1909, located in College Park, Maryland. Italy proved its competitiveness in the aviation industry by building in 1908 its first airports, one in Rome and one in Turin, Centocelle e Mirafiori.[46] The result is the birth of a new type of building that spread in the world's cities as a monument to modernity and avant-garde. What seems normal today, at the time was a great innovation that deeply influenced the design of the cities and allowed a glimpse to the possibility of a massive use of aviation in the army. The plane is the new symbol of the city, as clearly shown the project by Le Corbusier for the Ville Contemporaine, 1922. In the drawings of Le Corbusier the transport infrastructure are highlighted and have special place within the city. The transportation hub is placed in the center. The car is glorified and the airport is raised and set in the heart of the urban settlement. The declared importance of the airport in the city is a direct legacy of World War I. The First World War gave rise to the cult of the machine and the futuristic architecture. It was a moment of high technological progress related to automation that do not forget the constant danger of total destruction.

One of the most dramatic consequences of the First World War is manifested even before the end of the conflict. It was surprising the increasing number of military cemeteries, which became one of the most

44_ R.G. Grant, (ed. italiana a cura di R. Niccoli), Il volo – 100 anni di aviazione, Novara, DeAgostini, 2003, p 148-151

45_ R.G. Grant , Op. Cit. p 152-160

46_ G. Dicorato, G. Bignozzi, B. Catalanotto, C. Falessi, Storia dell'Aviazione, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, Milano, 1973, p 22
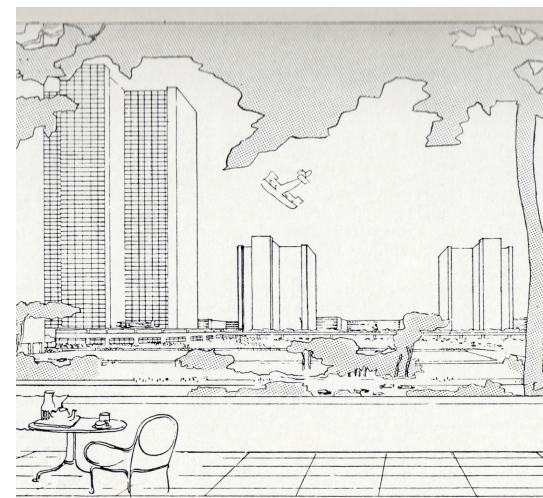
XXI_ Le Corbusier, Ville Contemporaine, 1922

common architectural interventions of the war period. Some groups, including the Deutscher Werkbundt, were involved in the design of the burial sites proposing the myth of the warrior.[47] Reginald Blomfield and the writer Rudyard Kipling, worked together in the realization of the commemorative Etaples cemetery near Le Touquet (1918-1920), and for the Thiepval Memorial (1927-1932), a giant arch of stones and bricks evoking an abstract quote of classicism.[48]

Another example of memorial is the monument built by Johannes Tannemberg and Walter Kruger in Hohenstein, East Prussia (1924-1927). The memorial was constituted by a series of towers arranged in a circle, clear evocation of Castel del Monte. A different approach is shown in the work of Giuseppe Terragni: Monumento ai Caduti (1932-1933) in Como. In this case the experimentation and the industrial contaminations occur in an extremely aerodynamic work based on a futurist sketch Sant'Elia. At the end of the war, the reconstruction became a priority involving also the places that were not directly hit by the war, and those that had suffered from huge transformations and now need a new territorial formulation and new destinations. The reconstruction assumed an international proportion. At the beginning of 1917, the American George Burdett Ford helped "*La Renaissance des Cités*" in the reconstruction of Reims, proposing a project based on zooning.[49] The reconstruction work of planners in France, in Belgium, but also in Prussia, showed a strong conservative tendency, often extolling the triumph of regionalisms. The use of recognizable forms a was strongly supported trend and was occasionally supplemented by new technological revolution in the field of construction. The immediate post-war period saw extensive use of reinforced concrete especially in the north - east of France, used mostly in the context of industrial and civil buildings.

 In the reorganization of the city however, the regional trend was accompanied by a standardization and rationalization evident in the functional behaviour.

The effects of the war were not only related to the reconstruction but showed themselves on a regional scale with the distortion of political geography that determined the birth of new boundaries. Something that was once again a profound changing on urban planning and architecture.

47_ G. L. Mosse; Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars; Oxford University Press, Oxford 1990

48_ T. J. Skelto, G. Gliddon; Lutyens and the Great War; Frances Loncoln, London 2008

49_ First project of the reconstruction carried out in France – G. B. Ford; Out of the Ruins; Century, New York 1919. W. MacDonald; Reconstruction in France; Mc Millan, New York 1922

In the following years, the economy was strengthened by the spread of Fordism that seemed to promise durable consumer goods at affordable prices. In imitation of the strategies of advertising companies, whose growth accompanied the spread of consumerism, in the same way some architects started to the use the slogan to sum up their beliefs and their aesthetic position. Situation that is not too distant from contemporary star-system. Le Corbusier defines his "*Cinq points d' une architecture moderne*" (1927), while Henry - Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson claimed the "*Three Principles*" of the International Style (1932). The predilection for this new type of architectural formulations, the diffusion of new architectural magazines and the easy photographic reproduction sanctioned the rise architecture in the world of mass media. During twenties and thirties the first art and architecture magazines are published. *Arte e Architectura* was published for the first time in May of 1921 under the direction of Giovannoni and Piacentini, *G* born from El Lissitsky and the Dadaist Hans Richter in 1923, the famous *ABC* in 1924 showing the influences of Russian constructivism.[50] Architect became the hero of modern times and the architecture was transformed into an intellectual debate with easy access and wide distribution coming from academic experiences.

50_ L. Prestinenza Puglisi, La Storia dell'architettura 1905-2008, prima versione, pubblicato in: http://presstletter.com/2013/07/storiadellarchitettura-1905-2008-testo-completo-di-lpp/ 13 luglio 2013

War, which caused a violent physical destruction, at the same time generated a thriving cultural debate of around issues that concern society and new forms of aesthetic redemption of the city in the post-war period. The upheavals brought on by the First World War were a major driving force for growth in the architectural field. New needs and strategies generated new buildings and new technologies. What determined the destruction, was then fertile background for future development. Similarly, the advent of the revolutions was able to create new architectural needs and to advocate new ideals. In the period from 1917 to 1932, Russia experienced the season of revolution, and it was thanks to the dramatic social and political situation of Russia at the end of the first war that the revolution spread. The Russian Empire exhausted by defeats and heavy losses had to capitulate. At the end of the war there were about six million victims, and heavy political defeats that determined the loss of Poland, part of the Baltic states and Ukraine. The overthrow of the Tsarist regime was an epochal event

that led to the formation of the first Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Few years later the social and economic theories of Marxism were applied for the first time and influenced twentieth century on a global scale.

Energy and ideals resulted after the civil war and repression, marked a dramatic period and at the same time gave inspiration for incredibly prolific ages for architecture. So it is thanks to the Revolution that Russia became an active laboratory of architecture. The effects of the upheaval in October 1917 were immediate. Because of the civil war and the Bolshevik repression many of the leading personalities were sent into exile and the rise of the Soviets radically changed the characteristics of the political and cultural scene. Starting from 1918 there was a period of propaganda, which, though initially showed only with isolated monuments, grew soon modifying the design of streets, squares and public spaces. Ambitious projects were born and they tended to emphasize the emancipation of working class. One of the most famous projects was the Monument to the Third International by Vladimir Tatlin, which with its 400 meters of height explicitly wanted to compete with the Eiffel Tower. A group dedicated to the synthesis of sculpture and architecture called Sinskulptarkh tried to promote collaboration between different disciplines. They worked together on the theoretical framework of the "*people's houses*". In this climate of revolutionary mobilization, in 1920 the Bolsheviks began the GOELRO plan for the construction of a new network of power plants, a huge development plan related to the energy that was catalyst for the realization of new buildings for offices and new residential neighborhoods. USSR's architecture in those years was marked by many competitions in which well-known names in the world of architecture before 1914 as Ivan Fomin (neo-classical St., Petersburg), Zholtovski (neo- Palladian, Moscow) and Alexei Shchusev (who in 1923 reconstituted the MAO, Moscow Society of Architects). In contrast to previous generation of architects, two new groups were born: the ASNOVA (Association of New Architects) and OSA (Union of Contemporary Architects). The first, formed by Ladovski, Krinski, Dokuchaev and El Lissitzky, was very popular among young architects and tended to an expression of the tectonic structure of the buildings and the exaltation of the aesthetic function. The second group was made up of members with a

clear constructivist background.[51] From war to the years of revolution political overwhelming and social changes accompanied by extreme difficult conditions especially for Russia occurred. In this climate disaster, we can identify a continuum of typological innovation and experimentation that began just after the outbreak of the First World War that has not been arrested during the revolution.

In the second half of the twenties, the structure of neighborhood is changed due to the new concept of collective life. The new buildings were the result of Soviet specific researches. In order to influence and change the habits of people in the shortest time possible, new buildings became what constructivists called the "*social condenser*" with the aim of accelerating the change in the behaviour of the daily life of the working class. The famous Workers Club were born and represented the symbol of a new kind of society based on work force. The clubs contained auditorium, restaurants, spaces for sport and leisure and constituted themselves the symbol of propaganda. The new building typology in its plant showed a clear trend in the management of the working masses that was efficient and extremely controlled. This innovation drew its inspiration from the logics that had been used a few years earlier on the battlefield, where large numbers of people and resources were managed through careful. The Zuev Workers Club, by Golosov in Moscow, was located at the intersection of two streets and stood its cylindrical structure of glass that contained the stairwells that led to the other parts of the building. The cylinder was working not only as a distributive engine, but had also a symbolic meaning. Melnikov built five clubs in Moscow from 1927 to 1929 showing the continuous research and experimentation and the infinite possibilities of the new architectures. We remember the Burevestnikper Worker Club with its theater and the tower. The formal research for Melnikov went through the Kauchuk Worker Club (a static vertical cylinder), to the Club of Svoboda (a horizontal cylinder with movable walls), showing a shift from mere pursuit of monumentality to a kinematic architecture tendency. The second type of social condenser were the Communal House, residential complexes with amenities that well represented the new utopian community. In this case, the Communal House became a real slogan rather than a concrete and defined concept. The term was

51_ G. Canella, M. Meriggi; SA Sovremennaia Arkhitectura 1926 – 1930; Dedalo, Bari 2007. The periodic Sovremennaia Arkhitectura, or just SA, under all towards Ginzburg 1926 to 1930, published the projects of the OSA and numerous examples of Western architecture in an innovative graphics key

used to refer to a wide range of building types ranging from sparsely furnished dormitories for workers, to the luxurious residences in Moscow. The most successful project for collective life experiments was the Narkomfin Communal House. The project was carried out under the guidance of Nokolai Miliutin. The residential intervention represented a real transition from the traditional model of house to a new way of living focused on common use services. The industrial model of residences was interested by an approach stemming from the war in previous years. Was a new dwelling and radically changed the way of conceiving the house with a clear transition from the private to the public sphere: a true reversal of the concept of the individual and of the territory.

XXII_ Narkomfin Communal House, Moscow 1928-1932

The world would have be soon shocked by the Second World War. More than all the other wars of the modern era, it was literally all-encompassing, involving all productive sectors, influencing both citizens and military. Architecture was also dragged into the vortex of war. The results of the catastrophe were even more serious than those of 15-18, but despite what may appear, a tragic event of this magnitude has been for architecture the time of great transformations and innovations concentrated in just few years. The transformation and the rush to modernity began in the twenties and had its continuation in the years of the Second World War.

The new war was a catalyst for all kinds of architectural competence: from the new awareness of the building, which compares with a technological advancement in the field of war, to the programmatic architecture acting like a machine in the war scenario. Architecture has learned to manage design procedures in complex situations with frantic schedules, developed the necessary organizational capacity to advance projects rapidly. Projects were characterized by an industrial nature and very often were involving the regional scale.

Since the early years of the conflict, architects took part actively. While some architects managed to avoid taking part in the conflict, many others lived the tragic experience of the war drawing in their notebooks the evidence of the destruction. It seems unthinkable, but some of them were also able to participate in competitions despite being detained in prison camps. (The projects of some French prisoners were
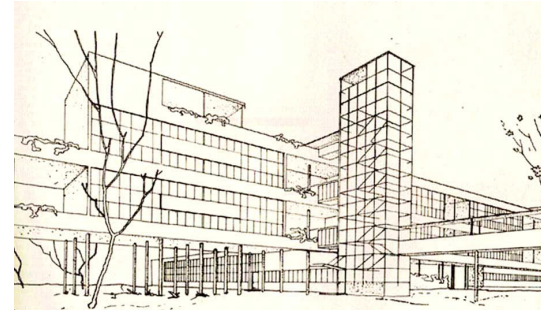
even exposed).[52] Others worked in the service of an intensified industrial production or to respond to the new needs of the battle. The new needs and technological achievements have produced examples of prefabricated and mobile architecture. The power of programming during war involved every aspect of the architectural production even in the architecture for the extermination planned by Third Reich. In this cases architectures took part into the process to establish a pattern of systematic enslavement and genocide by a typical industrial character similar in some cases to the assembly line.

Architects, mobilized as a group, had to face with difficult personal choices, especially those who were called to take part in the Nazi policies. In this sense, the war has also tested their moral: some became complicit in the policies of extermination, while others are distancing themselves become victims. We can not deny how thriving has been architectural activity during the years of totalitarian regimes, years in which public and institutional buildings were translating the fundamental characteristics of the dictatorship with new proportions and languages. One of the common aspects of the totalitarian regimes' architecture was the marked monumentality linked to the idea of greatness and strength of the nation clearly linked to the world of war and military supremacy. The totalitarian architecture in Italy, and then in the Soviet Union and in Germany, was intended to strengthen the national consciousness with a return to traditional values. From their architecture emerged a clear theatrical character , symbolic and didactic too. The war had forged a new image of the warrior and the monumental forms translated into the desire of domination over the enemy. One of the project of that period is the University of Heidelberg (or Thingstätte), used for the organization of parties associated with the Germanic past. The University of Heidelberg would have been contained many structures, often in a admixture of natural objects. These structures have been built following the model of an ancient greek theater, supported by a historical culture considered to be Aryan. This attitude physically linking the past and the Nazis helped to legitimize the Nazi vision of history and the Nazi regime itself.

Even in Italy the flourishing of architecture of regime was designed to represent the ideals and values of the dictatorship. In the con-

52_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012 p 112

struction of squares, monuments and public buildings there is a strong sense of order and hierarchy that is easily associated with the world of war. The architecture becomes the scene of a militarized society in which is possible to identify nationalist values and identity of the nation. With the advent of Fascism, Italian engineering and architecture were strongly influenced by autarky and the constant reference to the war. War was considered as a field in which the nation had to excel and where victory was proposed as a primary objective and rose to the status of a powerful symbol for the people. The victory and the assertion of military power are manifested in monuments which adorn Berlin and Rome. Columns and trophies, give shape to the cult of submission of the opponent and it could happen that were designed even before the victory's achievement. The glorification of war and the myth of the warrior with totalitarian regimes reached their maximum level. Architecture of the period took the conflict into account as a strong element for the planning process and strategic choices. Despite the steel was not a novelty in architecture, there was a wide use of concrete for the constructions of the regime, and the reason is again due to the needs dictated by the war in which it was necessary to preserve the steel for the battlefield. This, and other design logics, were all aimed at optimization of resources in view of a future conflict.

Both Nazi fascists employed architecture of colossal dimensions to intimidate and magnify his greatness . Both schemes have shown a strong connection between war and urban planning, which is realized in the implementation of some of the most important infrastructure projects of the last century. Albert Speer (1905-1981) was really close to Adolf Hitler. The Führer considered him as his personal architect, a role which determined the nickname "*architect of the devil.*"[53] He was one of the most important architects of the regime and author of most of the interventions promoted personally by Hitler. Speer was a skilled interpreter of the National Socialist values, and perhaps the personification of Führer's ambitions.

His work was internationally awarded with the gold medal for the German pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1937.

In 1942, after the death of Fritz Todt, Speer was nominated Minister of War. One of his first tasks and most famous works was the con-

53_ JV. Paolo, E l'architetto del diavolo sedusse Brandau, Corriere della Sera, 29 gennaio 1998, p 31

struction of the Nuremberg rally. The setting was based on a scene in Doric style that he wanted to call the altar of Pergamon. The project was really big, able to host 240,000 people. To increase even more the magnificent appearance, were used enormous spotlights to illuminate it. In Speer's works the ruin value was very important. In this case, the ruin, steeped in political sentiment, would become the legacy of a great national past, and looked to architecture with a future perspective in which the buildings would have lapsed, leaving the ruins that testify the greatness of the Third Reich, such as ruins of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire.

Speer was also in charge of urban-scale projects when he planned the reconstruction and redevelopment of Berlin. One of the earliest interventions was the construction of the Olympic Stadium for the 1936 Olympic games. Soon after he designed the new Chancellery (destroyed by the Red Army in 1945).

Almost none of the buildings designed for the new Berlin was never realized. According to the plans of redevelopment, the city would have develop along a 120 meter wide and 5 kilometers long. In the north part of the project Speer planned to build a huge domed building, which in the features would have to call up the dome of St. Peter with a diameter of about six times larger. To the south would have rised an arch, modeled on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, but bigger. The projects soon lost the attention of the Führer due to the outbreak of war.

Within the vast inventory of experiences, the themes that illustrate the diversity of the activities of architects are rooted in national contexts, from the U.S. to Japan, as well as in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union. The priority given by the war intervened strongly on design logics, use of materials, and the continued demand for steel. Wood and steel modified the production related to architecture. An innovation from the war's years is the invention of new composite materials. Assemble various components became one of the signs of modernity in the technological field in time of war. One of the new material born from experimentation during those years was the laminated wood, whose construction was made possible thanks to technological advances in the field of chemicals and adhesives. The

rediscovery of the wood and the production of plastic materials were created from the results of experimentation in the field of war transferred to the world of construction and architecture. Another important innovation was the standardization process already known during the first war but not so used. Standardization was well applied in architecture and determined the birth of new rules and regulations in the construction field. The new buildings both civil and military required careful planning due to the modularity according to precise standards, to meet the needs related to mobility and speed of assembly. One of the systems that had the most successful was the MERO system, designed by the German Max Mengeringhausen, commissioned in 1940 by the director of Lufteaffe to design structures that could be assembled instantly.[54] In America Gropius in collaboration with Wachsmann designed the Packaged House System, which consisted in modular load-bearing panels assembled with connecting standardized elements The new facilities were part of a complex supply chain that included several product categories. Most notable was the prolific work of Albert Kahn Associates who worked on the construction of the Chrysler Tank Arsenal (1941) in Michigan, the Curtiss-Wright factory in Buffalo (1941) and the Dodge Factory in Chicago, Illinois (1941-1942). In the June of 1942, the Architectural Record was interested in the activities of Albert Kahn Associates. The magazine has written about the "*magic formula*" a 600 employees office that could work so efficiently. As the architect of Ford and General Motors since the beginning of the century, also Kahn built its volumes thanks to steel frames. They were illuminated laterally and from above. Secondary spaces and service were located in the basement, in order not to impede the further expansion and to serve as shelters. In the Chrysler Tank Arsenal, the different stages of production were arranged in a linear pattern. Another project similar in size was the Ford Motors Bomber Plant, built between 1941 and 1943 at Willow Run. This single building of 100,000 m² was able to produce a plane per hour. The aviator Charles Lindberg has not hesitated to call it "*a sort of Grand Canyon of the mechanized world*."[55] While the Austin Company was supporting the "*windowless factory*", Albert Kahn proposed instead industries with natural light and with constant mechanical ventilation. The factories that Kahn has built in the Soviet Union between 1928 and 1932 were the object of these

54_ The system studied by Mengeringhausen developed the use of polyhedral nodes to which they could be connected up to eighteen tubes, system which could be used for the rapid construction of hangars offices or shelters. K. E. Kurrer; Ingenieurportrait: Max Mengeringhausen, ein Komponist von Raumfachwerken; Deutsche Bauzeitung138, October 2004, p 88-95

XXIII_ Chrysler Tank Arsenal, Warren Township, Michigan, by Albert Kahn Associates, 1941.

XXIV_ Chrysler Tank Arsenal, tank assembly line 1941

55_ L. Cohen; Architecture in Uniform: designing and building for the Second World War; Hazan, Paris, CCA, 2011 p 64

researches, and his tractor factory in Chelyabinsk became the central unit in the complex known as central Tankograd.

The rhythm with which the Chrysler Tank Arsenal, the Curtiss -Wright factory, and the Dodge Factory were built was exceptional. There was the need to be fast because of the imminent attack on Perl Harbour, and the design and construction were adapted to the canons of the same assembly line clearly inspired by the Taylorism.

The same methods were adopted in Germany during the heavy industrialization. The Aircraft Factory by Rimpl in Oraniemburg (1936-1938) and the Marchischer Metallbau designed by Egon Eirmann (1939-1941) were evident products of an industrial policy which used steel frames and prefabricated solutions for a rapid construction as in the American model.

Once again, turned to be "total", intervening at any scale on the territory and involving any kind of resources. In 1944, the German urban planner Ludwig Hilberseimer, who taught in Chicago, referred to the "*Bigness and Its Effect on Life*", stating that the main trend of the time was linked with big dimensions and large size. This trend was particularly evident in industrial production, logistics, and in the conduct of the war too. The production and administration in war times required the forces of a large number of workers and employees, whose movements and actions needed to be studied and planned in order to be effectively controlled. The rational management of enormous number of people became one of the basic elements of logistics in wartime, both during battles, both in civilian areas, with human flows of workers, employees, or even prisoners. Some big buildings were included in the extremely vast territorial networks. In Washington, for example, the Pentagon was a central point in an extensive system of highways and parking lots. The atomic structures in Oak Ridge were realized in that place only because of the connection with the hydroelectric plants of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The same principle was applied to the Soviet industrial projects in the east of the Ural Mountains, and in particular also for Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz, that was only a part of a large industrial area located at the intersection of the railways that connected it to the rest Europe.

Except for design of defence and industries, equally urgent was the
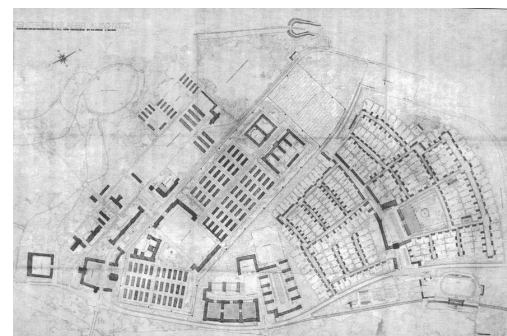
XXV_ Auschwitz masterplan, 1942

demand for housing for the workforce of the factories. The architecture had to be an efficient systems able to manage the flow of thousands of people and who had to "work" in the same way and with the same efficiency of the assembly line. (As evidenced by the Lanhaman Act of 1940, which allocated a budget of federal funds for the construction of workers' residences).[56] In California, many residential blocks were built in the immediate vicinity of factories, such as occurred in the district of Westchester in Los Angeles. Richard Neutra, after having participated in the development of the Avion Village in Texas (1940-1941), built four prefabricated housing blocks in the metropolitan areas of the major cities of the state. The most important was the Channel Heights in San Pedro, where were built about two hundred two-storey buildings made by prefabricated wooden structures.[57]

On the East Coast Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer collaborated in the design of Aluminium City in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, following the principles inherent in the Weimar era that considered the use of wooden structures and studies about landscape. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, grew in notoriety thanks to the committee allocated in 1942 for the construction of a city of 47,000 inhabitants in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which would host one of the sites of the Manhattan Project. The city is flanked by a very large industrial complex notorious for the production and study of new nuclear technology for military purposes (an event that forever changed the world of war). The Architectural Record reveals the "*construction of a secret city of 75,000 people who worked hard to atomic bomb, without being really conscious of what they were actually creating. This intervention is one of the biggest projects of the war.*"[58]

The complex consisted of three main buildings: the X-1 nuclear reactor, the Y-12 isotope separation factory, and the gigantic K-25 used to separate uranium hexafluoride gaseous diffusion, the whole plant came into operation in February 1945. The plant had the appearance of a U-shaped building, 135 meters long by 735 meters wide, with a total of eighteen acres. The town of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill built to house the workforce is stretched over a rectangle of about six miles. About 3,000 units were built with concrete panels mixed with asbestos. Other dwellings were transported by truck from Dallas in standardized modules, and still others came from Indiana and West

56_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012, p22

57_ T. S. Hines; Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: a Biography and History; Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p 175-180

58_ J. L. Cohen; Architecture in Uniform: designing and building for the Second World War; Hazan, Paris, CCA, 2011 p 66


XXVI_ K-25 plant oakridge, 1942

Virginia. In 1945, 10,000 single-family homes were built in a total of 13,000 units. There were also 5,000 stores and 16,000 shack, the only housing provided for workers in African Americans.

In 1943, Ludwig Mies van de Rohe built his first American building: the Illinois Institute of Technology campus in Chicago. Mies was able to realize the Mineral and Metal Reserch Center only thanks to the the particular historical moment and the war scenario. Since IIT worked on behalf of the army, the architect got an allocation of steel framing, which is unusual at that time in the United States.

The first factories Kahn had considerable resonance in Germany, even before 1914, and it is interesting to compare this building by Mies van der Rohe with those of the architect from Detroit. Unlike the Chrysler Tank Arsenal, the building by Mies differed for elegance and geometric perfection of the openings, and the precise arrangement of its masonry. In 1943 a strange set of buildings was built in Dugway, Utah. Lined up next to each other, the Japanese Village and German Village had only one goal: to be consumed by fire. Villages were built for a huge combustion experiments with naphthalene bombs combined with palmitate, or more commonly known as napalm, recently invented by Louis Fieser, a chemist at Harvard University and the Standard Oil Company. Several architects contributed to the success of the realistic experiment of unprecedented destruction. The German Village was designed by Erich Mendelsohn,[59] a prominent figure among Berlin architects. He managed the external volumes and materials for the cover. Konrad Wachsmann took care of the selection of wood.[60] Hans Knoll and German members of Hollywood's RKO Pictures Authenticity Division, chose carefully the furniture. Antonin Raymond, who spent twenty years in Japan, designed the prefabricated wooden structure and furnishing of the Japanese Village.[61]

In this way, architecture tragically became an instrument of the war system like the steel industry and the weapon industry. Its value in this case was related to the study of the destructive power of aviators and bombers in a spectacular disaster planned by forfeit.

As already mentioned, the incredible impulse towards modernity produced by the war led to a new conception of reality in terms industrial sectors: the production of weapons, the construction of new
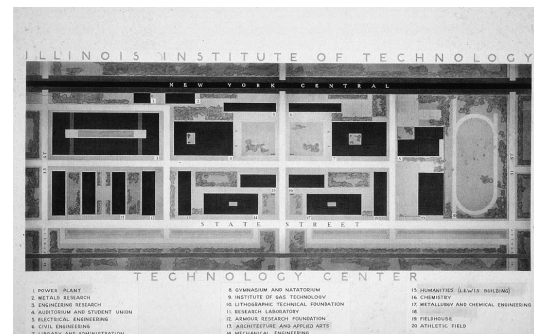
XXVII_ Illinois Institute of Technology by Ludwig Mies van de Rohe, Chicago, 1943

59_ M. Davis, Città morte: Storie di inferno metropolitano. Feltrinelli Editore, 2004, p75

60_ M. Davis, Op. cit., p73

61_ Helfrich, Whittaker, Kurt, William, Crafting a Modern World: The Architecture and Design of Antonin and Noemi Raymond, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2006, p53

residences for working class, and even the extermination and geno-
cide was now conceived as a piece of industry. Auschwitz, was un-
doubtedly the most emblematic place where it is consumed Nazi bar-
barism. The catastrophe of the war has produced rubble and cleared
the identity of the city. With the Holocaust and the annihilation of the
moral dignity of humans, the industrial logic found fulfillment assuming
the shape of the concentration camps. It was human destruction of
unprecedented proportions, which was perpetrated by the coldness of
logic from the assembly line. In Auschwitz, the creation of a center for
the chemical industry intended to produce synthetic fuel was combi-
ned with the creation of a concentration camp, whose initial purpose
was to make prisoners work until the death. After the Wannsee Confe-
rence of January, has been described fully planned the extermination
of the European Jews, or "final solution". Architects took part in this
sad enterprise. The traditionalist Hans Stosberg designed the overall
master plan of the area, as well as the largest chemical plant in Mo-
nowitz, and Fritz Ertl, student at the Bauhaus, designed the plan for
Birkenau.[62]

62_ S. Friedländer, Gli anni dello sterminio. La
Germania nazista e gli ebrei (1939-1945), Gar-
zanti, Milano 2009, pp. 347-348

In 1942, José Luis Sert in *Can our Cities Survive?* talks about
residences La Muette in Drancy, (a suburb in the north of Paris), as an
example of the new kind of housing that could be built after the war.
Designed to Drancy in 1934 by Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods,
and built in collaboration with Jean Prouvé, the project was experimen-
tal in form (five to fourteen-storey towers and buildings parallel) and
regarding technical point of view (built with precast concrete panels
connected to a steel frame). There was a changing in his usage desti-
nation, and it turned to be an important station for the deportation of
Jews from France. Though the bestiality of genocide and persecution,
there has been a celebration of the modern German state related to
industry and work efficiency.[63] The modern system programming of re-
sidences and industry has also involved the phenomenon of genocide,
which is treated exactly the same way as a common industrial system,
and as such was studied in order to be effective and efficient.

63_ Pubblished in 1945, il libro Drancy la Juive,
ou la Deuxième Inquisition, written by Jacques
Darville and Simon Wichené, narrates the suffe-
ring of prisoners in a place whose destiny had
been transformed by the war

The danger of air strikes during the second world war became a bur-
ning topic during thirties- first demonstration of the risk were the Ja-

panese incursions into China and Nazi bombings in Spain. Architects started to be interested in this new series of architectural and urban issues related to the technological progress of the war.

In 1930, Le Corbusier had raised the specter of a future air war, in justification of the urban system of his Cité Radieuse. At higher levels were placed the shelters for the inhabitants, in order to avoid the gas that remained to the ground level. The entire ground floor of the city is easily accessible and the winds would disperse the gas while an underground plant ensure the production of clean air.[64]

64_ K. Frampton; Storia dell'architettura moderna; Zanichelli Editore, Bologna 1993, p 174-182

During the early years of the Nazi period, new defence devices began to consider, and the projects by Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and the cities of the Soviet Nikolai linear Miliutin were taken into account. One of the main characteristics in facing the eventuality of an airstrike was the need to break with the traditional density and concentration of the city, which constituted a vulnerable militarily target. Even before the outbreak of war, some architects like Erno Goldfinger, realized studies for the evacuation of the civilian population. It was evaluated the resistance of existing buildings and their underground areas, in order to be transformed into shelters. Were also proposed the construction of artificial caves for large crowds and other proposals related solutions for the black-out, such as the curious girdle bright imagined by Norman Bel Geddes.[65]

65_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012, p 302

In London, the debate about civilians protection from air attacks became a political topic near to the end of 1930. The policies of conservative governments, supported by Winston Churchill, were based on individual refuges located in the gardens, leaving workers in dense unprotected residential blocks. But later the demanded for the construction of public shelters increased. With the support of scientists such as John Desmond Bernal, the biologist Julian Huxley, and the geneticist JBS Haldane, the architects of the Tecton group, led by Berthold Lubetkin and Ove Arup proposed underground shelters for the Finsbury borough in London. The project could accommodate up to 7,600 residents but was blocked by the conservatives, who preferred the model of the individual refuge.[66] However, after the experience of the blitz in London occurred in 1940, the policy of public shelters political and consisted in a network of deep tunnels. The appearance of the city changed drastically and arose new defensive buildings,

66_ J. L. Cohen; Architecture in Uniform: designing and building for the Second World War; Hazan, Paris, CCA, 2011 p121

massive and introverted, like Flake Towers built in Vienna and Berlin in 1943 and also in Hamburg by Friedrich Tamms which served as active defense. In the design of defense systems all the works were built with a high level of engineering considering the constant danger of air attacks. One example is the Moscow underground line, designed according to the defensive needs and able to withstand harsh bombing. The first line was opened on May 15th 1935. The conflict did not seem enough to stop the construction of the subway that continued to expand both during and after the war. The extremely deep underground had some points that have a clearly defensive set up. During the years of the cold war the Arbatskaya line was built and was useful as a shelter in case of nuclear attack.[67]

67_ Moskovskij metropoliten, GUP 2004

In the Germany of Adolf Hitler, understood the danger of a possible air attack, in 1940 started the program Sofort, an emergency program with the aim to build shelters for the civilian population. Numerous competitions were organized in order to develop these projects outwardly very often taking the form of old buildings. In Hamburg, Konstanty Gutschow built cylindrical shelters surmounted by a conical roof that evoked the windmills and medieval fortifications. The proposals for shelters for Bavaria or Austria by Roderich Fick, or to the North by Fritz Becker, were disguised as if they were barns with high walls and sloping roofs. The effectiveness of the shelters later proved not to be sufficient to face the heavy bombing that devastated German cities after 1942. The theme of the underground shelters has influenced the production of numerous artists and architects. Not infrequently, were born also movies that dealt with the issue of nuclear catastrophe where the only way to salvation is to take refuge in the bowels of the earth. The *Underground City Beneath Manhattan* imagined later by Oscar Newman describes a city that would be built in a huge underground vaulted space under Manhattan, excavated thanks to atomic bomb. The sub-city was similar to that on the surface, with a grid layout, roads and buildings at various levels, and large ducts that would filter the air coming from the upper world. His imagination is affected by the modern consumer world, and the immense vault which is the sky of the underground city is used for the screening of advertisements as the logos of Coca-Cola.[68]

XXVIII_ Underground City Beneath Manhattan, Oscar Newman

68_ "Manhattan could have a half-dozen such atomic cities strung under the city proper…the real problem in an underground city would be the lack of views and fresh air, but its easy access to the surface and the fact that, even as things are, our air should be filtered and what most of us see from our window's is somebody else's wall." In A. Sky, M. Stone; Unbuilt America. McGraw Hill, 1976, p192

The activity of the architects regarding the defense sstems consisted not only in the construction of shelters, but even in the creation of false targets through the use of camouflage. During the war many schools suspended their activities, while others carried out urgent tasks such as camouflage. In 1939, École des Beaux-Arts in Paris proposed as a theme for one of its competition a "*camouflaged town*". But it was in the United States, that the programs of related to camouflage spread further after 1941.

Many architects held courses camouflage, such as the one by Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania. Among the programs established at that time, there were courses of László Moholy-Nagy and Gyorgy Kepes at the School of Design in Chicago who have involved soldiers, engineers and psychologists (some works were published in the Civilian Defense). At the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, Konrad Wittman was working on a practical handbook of industrial camouflage, whose pages looks like a comic book.

One of the most successful cases is evidenced by the camouflage of the entire military base of Lockheed. In February 1942, he was spotted a Japanese submarine just outside the San Francisco Bay. Another was seen shortly after in Santa Barbara. The sightings led the U.S. government to protect military facilities on the Pacific coast. For the base airport Lockheed decided to use a real disguise, transforming it into what looks like an ordinary suburb. The task was entrusted to Colonel John F. Ohmer, an expert in hiding and distraction techniques. Designers, painters, architects, lighting experts and actors from the Hollywood studios, Disney and Paramount took part to the operation. The operation was successful and the base was never attacked nor identified by enemies. All of these programs have been the occasions for a productive meeting between architecture and notions of psychology, focused on "*making objects disappear,*"[69] the base of camouflage.

The years of war have undermined the logic of the design, the world of architecture during and after the conflict and the role of the architect and his role in society. The post-war period is the beginning of a new renaissance and opens with projects of social reform aimed at defining the characteristics of being completely renovated. The Labour party in Britain and the new regime in France that emerged from

XXIX_ Lockheed Military Base, before and after the camouflage, 1942

69_ J. L. Cohen; Architecture in Uniform: designing and building for the Second World War; Hazan, Paris, CCA, 2011 p 24

the resistance created a powerful public sector and education reform. In the United States, the IG Bill of Rights, signed by Roosevelt in 1944, allowed millions of veterans to attend college and buy a home. In Germany and Italy, a thorough process of democratization swept away the oppressive structures of totalitarian regimes. The new world imagined in the early post-war period has also hired new architectural features. Soon architecture become the unquestioned leader of the great reconstructions and cities disfigured by bombs. These plans are not only geared to the needs of reconstruction, but also a complete renovation of what survived after the devastation of the war. The first to be implemented were the British plans for Coventry, Plymouth and London. Plans for the reconstruction of Rotterdam developed under the supervision of the occupying forces, and projects for the city developed in the framework of the French Vichy regime would be reviewed after 1945. In Germany Hans Friedrich Hubert Leufgen and Pabst were commissioned to design a plan of "Germanization" for the city of Warsaw. Reconstruction plans were developed from 1940, even if they were implemented later, as happened in the case of France, Netherlands, and Russian plan of reconstruction in 1942.

Vichy in France, together with reconstruction, organized a legislative plan of modernization. In Holland, the architect Gerrit Willem Witteveen designed the new Rotterdam immediately after its destruction in 1940 at the hands of the Nazis. The energy of urban planners and architects found place even in extreme conditions. In Warsaw during the occupation Helena Syrkus directed a clandestine laboratory that prepared the plans for reconstruction, while Franco Albini, Pietro Bottoni, and a group of Milanese architects worked in secret in 1944 on the AR (Architettu Riuniti) for Milan's plan.[70]

70_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012 p 81

The war left an immense amount of rubble and voids. Entire cities disappeared and were rebuilt. The tabula rasa was a great opportunity for architects and planners, in order to intervene with new urban forms, and also the city that had been damaged in a minor would have had the opportunity to returnees in a process of total modernization. In 1943, the magazine Architectural Forum with its initiative "*New Building for 194X*" invited architects and urban planners to propose new cutting-edge technologies to describe the America of the future. There

was a great ferment of ideas around the new initiative emerged and new visions of the city. Victor Gruen introduced the prototype of the shopping center; Kahn and Storonov presented their vision of post-war home; William Lescaze designed a new type of fueling station; Mies van der Rohe designed the Museum for a Small City (an open space with movable partitions).[71]

During the war years the activities of CIAM came to a halt, and only a small group with Neutra and Wurster continued to discuss about new after-war design. The publication of Can our Cities Survive by Luis Sert clearly expressed the positions of CIAM and to some extent represented a point of reference for the conference in Athens. Even in the United States, the new positions of CIAM were expressed by Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion (secretary of CIAM) in "*Nine Points of monumentality*." The debate focused on the new value of monumentality in the context of reconstruction. The theme of monumentality had been up to that time a taboo topic within the modern movement because it easily attachable to a certain historicism and the Beaux -Art.

According to the CIAM "*Citizens want buildings that represent community and social life in order to give a response that is more functional, more than a mere satisfaction of material needs.*"[72]

The tabula rasa left by the war in this case takes the form of a necessary germinating condition for the formation of the new monumentality. According to the CIAM monumental buildings have to find a suitable location: "*The monumental buildings [should] be able to stay in space, such as trees or plants, [that] can not be placed one against each other.*"[73]

According to this view, the tabula rasa embodies a great value considered the necessary demolition of those bits of the city that had escaped the bombs, to allow a total and organic design. In addition to the reconstruction of the city, also pressed the issue of conversion of industries and the reuse of materials of war. In England, innovative and interesting solutions were collected in the Britain Can Make It exhibition in 1946 which included a section called "War to Peace" that showed a range of materials and objects of the war, revisited and reused for domestic and civil use.[74]

71_ A. M. Shanken; 194X: Architecture Planning and Consumer Culture on the American Home Effort; University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009

72_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012, p 293

73_ S. Giedion, Achitecture, You and Me: The Diary of a Deveopment, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1950, p 49-50; Cit in J.L. Sert, F. Leger, S. Gideon; Nine Points of Monumentality in Architecture Culture 1943-1968, Rizzoli Editore, 1993, p 27-30

74_ See Spitfires to Saucepans, in Britain Can Make It, supplement to the Board of Trade Journal, 28 Sept 1946, 4-5; and War to Peace in Council of Industrial Design, Britain Can Make It, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1946 217-220
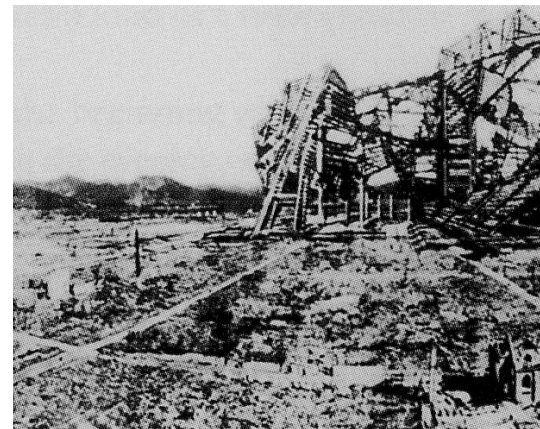
Buckminster Fuller has the merit of having led one of the most extra-ordinary campaigns to convince the government to convert entire military assembly line into new industrial uses in the early fourties. Despite a strong mobilization towards reuse, only a small proportion of the war industry found a new productive destination.

Even before the capitulation of Japan, there was a common sense of tension towards memory that was manifested in the creation of a large number of memorials.

Wilhelm Kreis drew a gigantic monument in memory of the Nazi victories in the USSR and Africa. In Russia, many memorials were erected, such as the Victory Monument at Stalingrad, and in Berlin was built the Teptow Soviet War Memorial.

Also Hiroshima saw his memorial by Kenzo Tange who designed the Hiroshima Peace Center (1949-1956). Arata Isozaki expressed the value of the ruins, and comments on the reconstruction took place in Japan:

XXX_ Ruins, Collage by Arata Isozaky

"I was a teenager when Japan had just experienced the Second World War and was a completely destroyed country. In the region where I lived many towns and villages literally disappear, and then around us there was nothing, just a country proved by war. I tried to reconcile and integrate the idea of ruin, destruction, with the projection of the future city using images: as a director I mounted illustrations and photos of the ruins, also taken from literature books, with a drawing of what could have been be the city of the future. This has led to the idea of a city that wanders in the air thanks to the elements as I was accumulating. I would like to emphasize that the tendency of many governments is to completely demolish what nature or other events have destroyed even partially, without taking into account the fact that all human beings have a memory. Clearly you need to rebuild, but in my opinion this should be done while maintaining the link with the past. I have been very critical of the Japanese government during the reconstruction of the city of Kobe after the 1995 earthquake. Even in that case the tendency of the local administration and the central government was to completely demolish what had survived the earthquake. In Hiroshima is still standing, in memory of the bomb, a single - ruined palace, which connects the city with the current city of the past. I

believe this is wrong. Is it right to think and to rebuild the city of the future, but this must be done while preserving the memory".[75]

In Rome, one of the most evocative memorial was the one by Mario Fiorentino, Nello Aprile and Cino Calcaprina (1944-1949) that commemorate the massacre of the Fosse Ardeatine by the Nazis. In Milan, however, stands out among the others, the Memorial to the Victims of Concentration Camps BBPR in the Cimitero Monumentale, built in 1946. The monument, whose fragility was in stark contrast to the solidity of the Roman monument consisted of a white three-dimensional grid in which were suspended panels with inscriptions.

At the end of the war there was a structural transformation both in society and in lifestyle. In Europe spread American culture that arrived during war with acronyms like Jeep, Sherman, and Flying Fortress. The new European wealth is contaminated for the first time from Hollywood movies and the lifestyle in a real cultural revolution. The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1947, spread all over the world thanks to the support of government agencies and many study trips from Europe to America, such as the Delano-Aldrich Grants program designed for students in France and the Rockefeller Foundation's Harkness Fellowship which allowed many students to study English and German in the United States.

From 1948 to 1951, thanks to the Marshall Plan, Europe experienced a period of unprecedented growth. However, the post-war reconstruction up to 50 years did not have a coherent development. The projects developed from 1944 onwards followed often diametrically opposed ways: on the one hand we witnessed a recovery which took particular account of the nature of the buildings before the destruction, on the other hand there were episodes of complete eradication of the historical traces remained. The reconstruction of Warsaw was a process that well conformed the idea of national revival. After being completely destroyed by German raids the city was the subject of the ambitious reconstruction projects carried out by Matthew Nowicki, and a precise program of recovery and restoration conducted by Zigmut Skibniewski. A similar but smaller intervention was the recovery of the medieval town of Rothenburgob der Tauber. This type of recon-

struction responded to a new logic which provided for the creation of a Museum Neighborhoods, where historic architecture was preserved and enhanced. New regulations to support this reconstruction led to a real change in the urban layout that in many cases saw the depopulation of city centers from the working classes.

Another type of reconstruction in many cases consisted in a radical redesign and modernization on a regional scale, often even against city centers. The new master plan for the city of London, designed by the MARS Group (Modern Arcitectural Reserch Society) in 1942 incorporated Westminster and the City in a Central Zone dedicated to government institutions and culture along an east-west axis that stretched for several kilometers. This area was limited by the highway that connected the different "legs" of the main residential neighborhoods. After the war there was a confirmed adherence to the modern movement, which had not quite success in England before the war. The plan for the bombed city of Coventry designed by Sir Donald Edward Evelyn Gibson in 1942 was particular for the total expropriation of the historic center and the construction of a modern urban layout. Basil Spence rebuilt the cathedral with an entirely new structure in stone and concrete but kept the nave as a symbol of memory. In the town of Plymouth, was required a complete review of the historical center, that even before the conflict resulted really poor in hygiene. The reorganization of the city in 1943 by Patrick Abercrombie and J. Paton whatson, involved the construction of a rigid axial system around which were built eighteen new residential neighborhoods. The British projects became a model often used in the reconstruction of European cities and London itself now appeared as a cluster of social communities,[76] each distinguished by particular characteristics or functions. The London of the future was designed without the systematic imposition of a grid or a rigid structure, but rather reformulating and updating the existing structure. One of the most original elements of the reconstruction were the British New Towns, which emerged as a self-sufficient urban entities composed of clusters of housing units assembled at the periphery of a central area that included public services and recreational facilities.[77] (The strong presence of urban cluster, however, was a totally unique example of city far from the idea of modernism).

76_ J. L. Cohen; The future of Architecture since 1889; Phaidon Press, New York 2012, p 303

77_ The policy of the New Town was recorded in the Town and Country Planning Act 1944. Royal commission on the distribution of the Industrial Population; Report, HMSO 1940 London

The British model was appreciated especially in Germany where it was essential for the formulation of the studies of Rudolph Shwarz on Stadtlandschaft (city conceived as a landscape). The idea of the group MARS was taken as an example for the Kollectivplan of Berlin in 1946 led by the direction of Hans Scharoun that in this case followed the Spree instead of the Thames. Berlin was meant to be a production center served by an infrastructure network denser than that provided for by the plan of Albert Speer, and with the plan of 1947 of Zehledorf more importance was given to car transport. Also in this case the idea was born to build a real cultural center around the Museum Island, plan which unfortunately came to a halt because of the division of Berlin in 1948.

Elsewhere, in Frankfurt, the city's reconstruction in 1950 led to the construction of skyscrapers that transformed the city into a new "Mainhattan".[78] In the reconstruction of the city of Cologne were built new buildings that maintained their original facades . In Frankfurt am Main, issues such as the center and the periphery , restoration and reconstruction, post-conflict became protagonists of the heated debate. Hamburg was one of the most damaged cities by air raids in 1942, and its reconstruction included a modernization of the center, where the existing roads were widened using a new east-west axis, and the creation of new suburbs. From a purely architectural point of view, one of the most successful projects of the reconstruction period was the German Alte Pinakothek in Monaco by Hans Dollgast, with its austere façade made by recycled materials (1946-1956). Dollgast refused to play the ornaments of the museum that had been destroyed, and preferred to leave the explicit testimony of the bombing. In the same way it was interpreted the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche in Dresden, deliberately left in ruins.

At the same time, in the Soviet zone, the architects tended to ideologically align themselves with their colleagues of the USSR, the Soviet model and was soon exported to the German Democratic Republic was created in 1949. The culmination of the projects for the urban redevelopment of the new Republic, involved the construction of a large transport artery called Stalinallee in East Berlin, built from 1951 to 1957. The Stalinallee stretched between two thresholds, both marked

XXXI_ Frauenkirche, Dresden 1945

by a pair of vertical elements: towers with a touch of Art Deco in Strausberger Platz and a building resembling a temple at the Frankfurter Tor. Along the new road axis were arranged very large new residential buildings, suggesting the intent to accommodate the working class in the heart of the city.

The final phase of reconstruction in Germany, and more particularly in West Berlin, was the project of a new neighborhood in the district of Hansa, built on the occasion of Interbau Exhibition of 1957. The project embodied the slogan "*Free World*" sponsored by the Atlantic Alliance. The buildings were designed Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius, Oscar Nyemeyer, and Jacob Bakema.

A year later, the competition for the Haupstadt Berlin. Berlin was inserted in a European debate that was analysing the theme of the city center on a larger scale. The center of Berlin, which included also a part of East Berlin, was the object of attention of architects. The project of Peter Sigmund and Peter and Allison Smithson, which was based on an organicist vision of the city, reached the third place, and did not have a high local impact. However, most of the proposed projects included a metropolis without any open street grid and tending to the type of vacuous stretches due to the British New Towns. A successfu project was the Philharmonic building in West Berlin by Hans Sharoun (1956-1963). Built just a few meters from the wall built in 1961, became the first element of a Culture Forum (Cultural Centre) whose purpose was to reintroduce a high cultural profile in the city.

XXXII_ Philarmonic, Hans Sharoun, Berlin 1956-1963

In France, the Ministère de la Reconstruction et de l' Urbanisme, founded at the end of the war in 1944, introduced a series of projects of modern architecture. One of these involved the reconstruction of the bombed city of Saint-Die, In this project the old road system was completely replaced by applying the new principles of the Athens Charter, according to which it was envisaged an industrial area on the south bank of the river and a series of residential complexes on the north shore. The architect took no account of the need felt by the population to identify with urban forms known as the old streets of the center, supporting the importance of a return to the contact with nature and the landscape. The new concept was not appreciated and so the left-wing organizations and the local bourgeoisie fought against

it forcing Le Corbusier to retire. Similarly another project that remained on paper was the one for La Rochelle and the Saint-Gaudens. One of the project that was built was Unitè d'Habitation in Marseilles.

CIAM played an important role in the reconstruction in Italy. His contribution is focused in the plane AR to Milan, designed according to principles of functionalist by Franco Albini, the group BBPR, and Peter Button. The project was focused on the creation of a new neighborhood that far from the old center of the town, which sprang from an important junction of roads. The project was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the future of the residential project QT8 theme of the Triennale in 1948.


In Europe during the reconstruction many of the projects were reviewed and corrected on the base of existing schemes already tested before the war that combined an expansion on a regional scale using new satellite city. Government intervention appeared on a totally different scale through public funding and new infrastructural systems. In Europe it was clear the idea of unitary city, which was realized in some cases through axial compositions and modern buildings such as the reconstruction as happened in Le Havre under the direction of Auguste Freyssinet (1945-1955). He organized the city around a great planted avenue. The city was rebuilt in reinforced concrete by a group of architects who ensured the high quality of the buildings, and the consistency of the whole project was ensured by the use of a single typology of housing unit. In contrast with Le Corbusier, André Lucart with his project for Maubeuge (1945-1954) managed to gain the esteem of the population by creating a system of streets and squares all over again but sensitive to a certain historical memory. Organized the work proposing for new buildings the use of standardized elements and prefabricated as stairs and windows.

In Japan, where the American offensive had destroyed most of the cities except for Kyoto the reconstruction took place through the construction of big infrastructures for transport and new buildings in steel and reinforced concrete according to references and reinterpretations of old wooden structures (as was in Tokyo and Osaka). In Tokyo, the urban planner Hideaki Ishikawa intervened with a plan that included a reorganization of the layout of the city and the creation of new green

areas (a project that was partially realized). In Osaka, Toshisha Kozu replaced the structure of the old city with an urban area characterized by greater density and height regulated by means of a grid.

The post-war era saw the consolidation of modern architecture uniformly throughout the world, with the exception of the Soviet bloc. But even beyond the Iron Curtain, the appearance of modernism was short-lived, due to the presence of socialist realism since 1945. This spread of modernism on a global scale was uneven, and often accompanied by debate, controversy and conflicts. The fifteen years that followed the war cannot be interpreted as a mere continuation of the architectural experiments of the twenties and thirties. Modern architecture grew in a way never seen before 1939 and was involved in confrontations between generations of architects that sometimes led to ruptures within the modern movement itself.

After 1945, the primacy of modern architecture has remained unchallenged, except in the Soviet Union. The war transformed not only the methods of construction, but also ways of thinking, and after six years of conflict, the architects put it into practice for peaceful purposes, the methods developed under the pressures of war. The contribution of wars and revolutions in the world of architecture and urbanism is considerable; our own way of living in the city now suffers from the difficulties that have faced architects and planners during the last century. This period is remembered as one of the saddest periods in our history and has left scars that are still hard to forget. The devastation of war was soon overlaid the new activities of artists and architects, that even under bombardment and in some cases forced to take up arms, they never stopped to innovate and contribute to the story, sometimes even for sad notorious purposes.
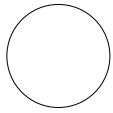
THE CATASTROPHE CELEBRATION

GIBELLINA CITTÀ D'ARTE, UTOPIAS AND FAILURES OF RECONSTRUCTION

"TALVOLTA CITTÀ DIVERSE SI SUCCEDONO SOTTO LO STESSO NOME, NASCONO E MUOIONO SENZA ESSERE CONOSCIUTE, INCOMUNICABILI FRA DI LORO [...] CITTÀ DIVERSE SI SUCCEDONO E SI SOVRAPPONGONO SOTTO UNO STESSO NOME DI CITTÀ, OCCORRE NON PERDERE DI VISTA QUAL È STATO L'ELEMENTO DI CONTINUITÀ CHE LA CITTÀ HA PERPETUATO LUNGO TUTTA LA SUA STORIA, QUELLO CHE LA HA DISTINTA DALLE ALTRE CITTÀ E LE HA DATO UN SENSO. OGNI CITTÀ HA UN SUO PROGRAMMA IMPLICITO CHE DEVE SAPERE RITROVARE OGNI VOLTA CHE LO PERDE DI VISTA, PENA L'ESTINZIONE [...] UNA CITTÀ PUÒ PASSARE ATTRAVERSO CATASTROFI E MEDIOEVI, VEDERE STIRPI SUPERSTITI SUCCEDERSI NELLE SUE CASE, VEDER CAMBIARE LE SUE CASE PIETRA PER PIETRA, MA DEVE AL MOMENTO GIUSTO, SOTTO FORME DIVERSE, RITROVARE I SUOI DÈI." [79]
Italo Calvino

79_ I. Calvino, Gli dèi della città, 1975

Gibellina, a small town of Trapani province,[80] was one of the fourteen villages[81] destroyed by the earthquake of Belice in January 1968, that destroyed 280 000 hectares of land. In a few minutes the four villages near to the epicenter were destroyed: Gibellina, Montevago, Poggioreale, and Salaparuta. Ibbidinia, as the inhabitants of the area call the small city, was no longer existing in just few minutes. The devastating force of the earthquake destroyed a total of 14 municipalities. After the disaster, Gibellina lived a lucky moment characterized by cultural and artistic ferment that promoted the rebirth thanks to famous names in the world of architecture and contemporary art. The new Gibellina has changed its face and has become one of the most discussed examples of reconstruction of recent times in the Italian scenario. From the very beginning, comments were divided between excited and skeptical. It was the occasion to wonder about the real success of the project, the role that architecture has played in the reconstruction, and if we can still give value to an architecture without users. The artistic value of the works is indisputable, but it is not the same for their social value. Today, Gibellina looks like a ghost town with beautiful pieces of art.
Gibellina was a small size town, with no particular attraction, like many other small villages in the area. At the day of the earthquake, there

80_ According to Thucydides and Diodorus, was founded before the year II of the V Olympiades in 759 BC. Enlarged and according to some historians founded by the Arabs in the Upper Middle Ages, the medieval town formed around the fourteenth century around the castle built by Manfredi Chiaromontes; Italian Touring Club; Sicily; Touring Editore, 2009

81_ The destroyed towns were: Calatafimi, Camporeale, Contessa Entellina gibellina, Memphis, Montevago, Partanna, Poggioreale Salaparuta, Salemi, Sambuca, Santa Margherita Belice, Santa Ninfa, Life

were about six thousand inhabitants,[82] and the village was made up of agglomerates composed of houses with two elevations. Houses were really poor constructions: tufa for the main structures, mortar and plaster for coating. Roofs in most cases, were made with wooden beams. Cement and concrete were rarely used and in no case were adopted seismic criteria, partly because the area, at the time of the earthquake, was not included among those city considered at risk from earthquakes.[83] Once after the earthquake there was not the real comprehension of the seriousness and the drama of the event. The destruction magnitude of the earthquake was also underestimated by the media. Many newspapers reported the news of a few injuries and a few damaged houses. The real situation of the Gibellina's devastation was understood when the first rescuers arrived. The quake was merciless and houses, monuments and churches of the city were literally razed to the ground. The same destructive violence occurred in other towns near the epicenter of the quake, as happened in Salaparuta and Poggioreale. The viability of the area was severely damaged by slowing the arrival of rescuers. President of the Republic and the Minister of the Interior Affairs Giuseppe Saragat, and Paolo Emilio Taviani visited the affected areas the following days. The quake shown the dramatic condition of backwardness of western Sicily areas. Among the others, the decay of tufa housing, which collapsed under the earthquake. This data represented an inconvenience that the State knew and neglected, as well as overlooked the consequences of the earthquake. In terms of natural disasters, was one of the worst episodes in the Italian post-war history. The tectonic disaster worsened the situation of a southern reality that was already living a strong social disadvantage since the early sixties: a liberation from feudalism perhaps never occurred, a severe exploitation of workers in the agricultural sector, a burden parasitic brokerage of Mafia, and the problem of water supply to irrigate agricultural fields (problem still not fully solved). Belice's villages grew during the years of economic boom, often without any support systems that governed the planning or the validity of the structures of the new tenements. Once after the shock and completed the emergency assistance to populations, cities were abandoned and in the immediate vicinity arose the first tented camps, which were destined to remain even after the reconstructions.

82_ M. Oddo; *Gibellina nuova: ricostruzione o ri-fondazione?*; Einaudi editore 1993, p54

83_ G.C. Marino; Terremoto in Sicilia; Edizioni Andò, Palermo 1980, p34

XXXIII_ Gibellina after the earthquake, 1968

The tragedy provoked a high civic participation. A public demonstration of sensitization has occurred March 2nd 1969, when about 1,500 people camped for four days in front of Montecitorio. The event served to sensitize politicians to sign a law (March 5th) for the construction and development of the Valle del Belice, which served to calm things down, but not to meet expectations. As stated the mayor Ludovico Corrao: "*Il movimento tellurico era già interno alla società*".

After the news of the destruction that hit Belice, many people were interested to grab a contract, even not legally. The post earthquake was a big attraction for speculators and mafia infiltration that saw in the catastrophe an excellent opportunity to speculate. There were many good intentions, proclamations, and allocations of funds. In addition to the difficulties of reconstruction were added dynamics that were related with mafia's interests. The troubled years of reconstruction characterized by little transparency are today still not clarified. More over, Mafia killed Vito Lipari, mayor of Castelvetrano, (August 13th 1980), who was aware of the cheating organized for the reconstruction of Belice. He knew, for example, that the whole plan of reconstruction of the area between Castelvetrano and Gibellina was false. Sad episodes of a lame policy of the time.
Nowadays, the reconstruction is not fully completed and the struggles of the poet and sociologist Danilo Dolci are still valid. He seriously undertook the struggles against political malfeasance. His commitment was huge and his sentence are well known, part of them written on the walls of the ruins: "*The bureaucracy kills most of the earthquake.*"

There have been many reconstructions in the Belice areas, and unfortunately in many cases they were incomplete or never finished. This caused an even greater damage to the towns in difficulty, already economically precarious. Regarding the case of Gibellina, there are many issues involved that have characterized the debates on reconstruction and the foundation of the new city.
Gibellina has been dubbed the "city of art" even though he had a past not linked in any way to artistic activities. It represent the only example of this rare kind of reconstruction in Italy in the second half of twentieth century. The designer Marcello Fabbri, summarizes in his plan

different elements that make Gibellina, an entirely drawn place.

From his drawings emerges a strong utopian project, and a since-re adherence to the theme of participation, shouted loudly by Danilo Dolci (and also supported by Bruno Zevi). Another key issue related to the development of the project for the new Gibellina regarded the attention to the size of the intervention, declined in every part with an analytical and demonstrative attitude. These factors contributed to the creation of a project unique in the design, abstract and concrete at the same time, a sort of butterfly shape resting on the ground with big wings joined by a body of public buildings.

The central axis contradicts somewhat the sinuous plant of the residential wings. The innervation of the places with a urban destination was the result of the project designed by Franco Purini. The theoretical background behind the unrest linked to Gibellina finds its roots in the immediate post-war period. It represents the reaction to the city conceived as a machine, the functionalist system, and the patterns of paradigmatic types of architecture gained from the experiences of architectural rationalism. Gibellina was the occasion to implement a particular design and a collective intervention present in the urban debate during a restless phase of architectural research. The solution for the crisis seemed to be the "meta-projects" open to possible different solutions, but always according to the ideology of a large-scale transformation, which also leaked the uncertainties and contradictions of urban planning and architecture. Prototypes that produced these restless suggestions tended to a clear "return to order". Another model (published in the magazine *Controspazio n.1*) are the works of Luis Kahn. On the other side the intention of overcoming of the post-organic crisis was exemplified with the research of the newborn Metamorph team (which presents to the territories of Belice concrete architectural results). The eclecticism of those years produced glaring contradictions: from the gigantism of the Corviale, to aseptic rigor of Monte Amiata district in Gallarate, following with the grace and delicacy of specimens from Gabetti and Isola, and the brutalism of Cannella & CE. In this complex situation prevailed also the cultural debate proposed by UNRRA-Casas.[84] According to the choice of the mayor Ludovico Corrao, the new Gibellina was built about 20 km away from the city razed to the ground, on a hill near Salemi, in the offing of

XXXIV_ Gibellina, Masterplan.

84_ The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was an organization of the United Nations, with headquarters in Washington, established November 9, 1943 to assist economically and civilly countries severely affected by World War II. it was abolished December 3, 1947. The organization drew its funds from contributions that states that had not suffered the ravages poured for the post-war reconstruction. In a second time, his work was also extended to the defeated countries. Italy he was admitted in 1946 following the agreements of Rome. In Italy in particular were established UNRRA-Tessile, which belonged to the distribution of cotton and wool, and UNRRA-Casas, for the reconstruction of houses.

the Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway. This decision arose from the need to connect the city to the regional road system, and removing Gibellina from the isolation in which it had lived up to that moment. Physical and symbolic distancing from the old town then, associated with a strategic positioning of the new city with respect to the theme of the future expansion. The new design of the city had a peculiarity which later turned to be relevant for his failure: its spaces were very wide, and this vastness quite unusual for the villages of the rural area and quite alien to the historical centres, have generated some dimensional indeterminacy and a perpetual sense of unfinished. As soon as the route was completed, and the houses were built, Ludovico Corrao began to interpret the urban structure as if it was network to be filled with a huge number of works of art, a challenging composition that sought to unify the landscape, the city and architecture. A vast open-air museum was born. The intuition of Ludovico Corrao started by creating a new visual memory of the places. New hallmarks of an urban settlement that could host new memories for a community o whom the identity had been razed to the ground, physically and psychologically.[85] It was clear from the idea of Corrao that Gibellina would have been elevated to the status of a important cultural center for the whole Sicily region, escaping from anonymity and to a certain provincialism characteristic of small towns.

The first consideration concerned the underlying structure of an urban project that had to be established on the basis of the organization of a real aesthetic system in which the key element would have been memory, history and culture. It was a complex system of coded signs which gave life to the abstraction trough which the project was conceived in the initial phase. For the new Gibellina, the choice was oriented towards the maximum cohesion of the urban image. This intention, however, despite the best efforts, turned to be only partially successful. After the fragmentation generated by the earthquake, the idea of cohesion was seen as a key prerequisite for the new foundation. The new urban form, that was integrated with the spatial character of the morphology, brought to the area a great work of land art rather than a traditional urban setting. The civitas' structure and its shape are reflected in continuous interview with, and, in the environment, with

85_ S. Costanza; I giorni di Gibellina; Flaccovio Editore, Palermo 1980, p 93

XXXV_ Stella d'ingresso al Belice, Pietro Consagra, 1981

the collective memory and sense of belonging and identity. The new Gibellina is immersed in an aesthetic concept inside the urban structure and its civilization, captures the relationship with the morphology and enters in a continuous dialogue with the environment.

Gibellina's catastrophic event was exploited as a great opportunity to create a new identity. It is representative of a spirit of revenge in a small town that wants to affirm itself within the international scenario. The reconstruction after the disaster, has attracted the attention of a certain elite who, through the program edited by Corrao, has evaluated those agricultural places revisited in an artistic way as it happens with a great exhibition.

Long before the Gibellina case, on the other side of the island, the Val di Noto found himself in a similar condition caused by the earthquake that occurred in 1693. The disaster was soon replaced by the notoriety of the Distretto del Barocco, promoted by UNESCO.

Gibellina new design soon shown its contradictory poetics, from which emerged the limits of repeatability, modularity, and formal inventions of design on a large scale. The comparison with the reality, then, was framed in the guidelines of an image on a large territorial scale resulting from the Territorial Plan of Development. The ability of the mayor was to be able to see the catastrophe as the opportunity of generating a new story and allowing a real cultural redemption. Gibellina has captured an international interest for the realization of important architectural works by eminent designers. More over Gibellina has the largest collection of works of art in an open air installation. There is no doubt that Gibellina constitutes an important test of the relationship between art and public space. This report is made even more significant thanks to the overlapping of the growth of the city and the overcrowding of the pieces of art, which seem to stretch almost to a mutual comment. Currently, for a population of about five thousand inhabitants there is another "population" of sculptures and architectures placed in the city. The particularity of the experiment conducted in Gibellina, is not so much in the statistical percentage of the number of works per inhabitant (far superior to any city of new construction), but is represented by the power to revived a destroyed territory and challenging the role of the artwork in the configuration of a new urban space.

In the design process, the schematic and geometric stiffness that had

guided the conurbation was abandoned[87] and replaced with a more flexible design that give the possibility to be expanded over time in a more adaptable way. The shape of a large butterfly resting on the ground, readable on a regional scale, it is still present and gives a strong connotation to the landscape. The first satisfactory result was a system with a large urban hemicycle that collected all the streets in a synthetic way (1969-1972).[88] The proposed effort was to reach a kind of city without suburbs with a real settlement winding through residential architectures, services, but also significant architectural or visual images.

The coordinator of the design team had to face sharp divergence of views between high-profile designers. The differences concern not only radical differences in the poetic, but also related to the conflict of rigidity versus flexibility.

Today, the artistic heritage of Gibellina collect the works by:

Carla Accardi, Senza Titolo (1989)

Giovanni Albanese, Ascoltare

Marcella Aprile, Roberto Collovà e Teresa La Rocca, Baglio Di Stefano (1981)

Bigert & Bergstrom, Pausa Sismica

Cosimo Barna, Mediterraneo

Alberto Burri, Il grande Cretto (1980)

Giuseppe Burzotta, Orto botanico

Carmelo Cappello, Ritmi Spaziali (1979)

Andrea Cascella, Fontana (1986)

Carlo Ciussi, Frequenza di Onde (1982)

Hsiao Chin, Pannello in ceramica

Pietro Consagra, Meeting (1976), Stella d'ingresso al Belice (1981),Teatro (1984), Da Oedipus Rex "Città di Tebe" (1988),Tris (1988), Porta d'ingresso all'orto botanico (1996), Porte del Cimitero (Ettore Colla, Meridiana/Ellittica (1987)

Salvatore Cuschera, Scultura sdraiata (1992)

Giampaolo Di Cocco, Animalia Grandi Naufraghi XII

Marcello De Filippo, Grande area 85 (1990)

Mimmo Di Cesare, Tempo del Sole (1989)

Nino Franchina, Labirinto (1983)

Vittorio Gregotti, Alberto Samonà e Giuseppe Samonà, Municipio (1972)

Emilio Isgrò, La freccia indica l'ombra di una freccia (1979)

87_ R. Gabetti, C. Olmo; Alle radici dell'archi-tettura contemporanea; Einaudi 1989, p 78

88_ E. Cristallini, M. Fabbri, A.Greco; Gibellina una città per una società estetica; Gangemi Editore, Roma, p 33

XXXVI_ Mimmo Paladino, La montagna di Sale, Gibellina

Slimane Khaled, Pannello in ceramica

Carlo La Monica, Monumento a Salvo D'Acquisto

Igino Legnaghi, Tavolo dell'alleanza (1980), Ritmi sismici

Alfonso Leto, Meteoriti della memoria (2002)

Elio Marchegiani, Affresco

Milton Machado, Senza Titolo (1990)

Fausto Melotti, Contrappunto (1983), Sequenze (1984)

Alessandro Mendini, Torre Civica (1987)

Salvatore Messina, Tensioni (1979)

Agapito Miniucchi, Cestnei 1987

Ignazio Moncada, Pannello in ceramica (1980)

Hiroshi Onhari, Scultura

Mimmo Paladino, Montagna di sale (1990)

Arnaldo Pomodoro, Aratro per Didone (1986), Macchine sceniche

Franco Purini e Laura Thermes, Casa del Farmacista (1980), Sistema delle Piazze. Progetto di 5 grandi piazze consecutive (1982-1990), Casa Pirrello (1990)

Ludovico Quaroni e Luisa Anversa, Chiesa Madre (1970-1972)

Mimmo Rotella, Omaggio a Tommaso Campanella (1987), Città del Sole Opera nel Giardino Segreto 2 (1992)

Marco Nereo Rotelli, Lo spazio della parola (2001)

Paolo Schiavocampo, Una Piazza per Gibellina (1987), Doppia Spirale (1987)

Gino Severini, Mosaico

Medhat Shafik, Qanat, le rotte del cielo (1996)

Turi Simeti, Impronta (1979)

Giuseppe Spagnulo, Senza titolo (1974)

Daniel Spoerri, Renaissance Opera nel Giardino Segreto 2 (1992)

Mauro Staccioli, Per Gibellina (1980)

Giuseppe Uncini, "Sacrario ai Caduti" (1986), Monumento al Carabiniere

Costas Varotsos, L'infinito della memoria (1992)

Francesco Venezia, Museo a Gibellina, Palazzo Di Lorenzo(1981-1987), Giardino Segreto1 (1985-1988), Giardino Segreto2 (1992)

Nanda Vigo, Tracce Antropomorfe (1978), Chiesa di Gesù e Maria e centro sociale(1979)

Darya von Berner, Marcha des elefantes

XXXVII_ Sistema delle Piazze, Franco Purini e Laura Thermes

The people from Belice have continued to remember the earthquake with a continuity of action and recollection using beauty as timeless heart of the new city. The plastic memory, which gave shape to the Grande Cretto, includes not only the ruins embedded in the white cement, but also the original relationships between the old village and landscape. The memory consists of matter and the ruins, and the memory is physicality fulfilled in the work itself. The intervention of Alberto Burri, like those of other artists who answered to the call of mayor Corrao, aroused heated discussions.

"Today, the visitor has the feeling of drifting in an immense tomb, as powerful as sculpture nestled in nature, but alien to any idea of resurrection."[90]
Rafael Argullol

90_ R. Argullol, Pubblicato su «El Pais», 9 jan 2011

The project by Joseph Beuys is in clear contrast to the intervention of Burri, adopting a different perspective for the concept of memory. While Burri transformed the original Gibellina in a proper tomb. The German artist aimed for the celebration of the rebirth designing a path that would connect together the ruins of Gibellina with the cemetery on a not far hill. Probably it was the desire to establish a communication between the tombs and the vacuum that followed the destruction, or to create an exact correspondence between the two sites. In the project the thought of Beuys was reversed and the forest would become a kind of thoroughfare to revive the new Gibellina keeping in touch with the old downtown and with the memory of the deceased.

Today, there are three Gibelline: the old town covered the Cretto, the city of the barracks with the Sacred forest Beuys, and the new village. Someone has said that thanks to time the new architectures will be fully accepted. The advent of the art in Gibellina has been acclaimed by many and vilified by others. The positivity of a large-scale intervention involving famous artists and architects from the international scene was accompanied by the dissent, not entirely unfounded, that was pointing the finger towards the common accuse of having accelerated the construction of the new Gibellina of art and architecture, without giving priority to the reconstruction of housing, services and infrastructure. The malcontents were soon allayed by the great echo that

XXXVIII_ Grande Cretto, Burri

followed the realization of the first architectures. The ferment around Gibellina was a positive phenomenon for the re-launch of the image of the small Sicilian city. A theatrical figuration, inherent in the cultural roots of Gibellina would have been developed gradually with a fusion of artistic experiences in which theatrical practice had an important role. As a product of the creativity and innovativeness of the sixties, in Gibellina the effects of artistic research are visible.[91] The new Gibellina captured elements sprouted from Fluxus or Forma1, forming a new urban figuration of Gibellina which is totally abnormal if compared to the images of other contemporary projects.[92]

The artistic and cultural ferment materialized from 1981 onwards in the cultural event called Orestiadi. It was an international festival of theatre, music, art, sculpture and films. The Orestiadi, founded by the mayor Corrao, took place every summer in Gibellina at Baglio Di Stefano. In 1992, the Orestiadi were transformed into a foundation. The foundation was also editor of the magazine Labirinti, directed by Giovanni Ingoglia and distributed by Feltrinelli. During the 27 editions of Orestiadi took part personalities like Ignazio Buttitta, Janne Vibæk, Fhatem Safieddine, Antonio Pasqualino, Robert went, Franco Scaldati, Fulvio Abbate, Achille Bonito Oliva, Demetrio Paparoni, Francis Lamb, Paolo Scarnecchia, and Marco Paolini.[93] Unfortunately Orestiadi, which helped to keep alive Gibellina after the novelty of the architectures, stopped the activity four years ago because the lack of funds. The financial contribution comin from Sicily Region has dramatically decrease making it impossible to confirm the event.

The apparent luck of artistic interventions, and the resonance of the event, however, have been shorter than expected. Because of mistake in planning or lack of maintenance, a large number of the early realizations began to show signs of deterioration. The decay have contributed to worsen the appearance of Gibellina in just few years after the reconstruction. In 1994, the roof of the Chiesa Madre designed by Ludovico Quaroni collapsed. It was never consecrated or used. Other architectures, such as the Palazzo by Francesco Di Lorenzo Venezia, was never finished, creating a great paradox and making Gibellina a museum city, where its architecture and works of art scattered along the roads forming a true art-park. In addition to structural problems, interventions and constructions that have continued to rise did not

91_ A. Greco in E. Cristallini, M. Fabbri, A. Greco; Gibellina. Nata dall'arte. Una città per una società estetica; Gangemi Editore 2005

92_ D. Camarrone; I maestri di Gibellina; Sellerio Editore, Palermo 2011, p 88

93_ G. Robustelli; Gibellina: Laboratorio di sperimentazione sociale; Associazione Culturale Finestre sull'Arte, eBook per l'Arte 2011, p 64

have the hoped resonance, perhaps due to a lack of adequate pro-
motion. In addition, only the light of a broader perspective will help in
understanding the reasons for the paradox of Gibellina's story. One
of the last episodes that brought light in a so special place were the
architecture laboratories called Belice80, but after them the city was
dragged into a deep inattention and a dramatic and oblivion. More
recent is the research project Topografia del trauma born in 2008. The
project focused a wide survey of the sites affected by the earthquake.
The attention was then focused on a more detailed study on the Valle
del Belice. The second phase of the research, structured in two work-
shops that were held in 2009 and 2010, has generated a large narrati-
ve archive, which was used to decompose the schedule of the territory
of Belice and then reassemble it in new critical representation. Arata
Isozaki took part to the workshop Topografia del Trauma in 2010. In
his speech he underlined the added value of the reconstruction and
the importance of a living memory:

*"Humanity is constantly fighting against the forces of nature; here in
Italy last year there was a tragic earthquake (L'Aquila). The nature is
always stronger than the human being; task of the architects is con-
stantly to carry out reconstruction work, not only in specific cases
where there is an earthquake or other natural disasters. I saw Gibelli-
na, the ruins of the old city, the Cretto. I was very impressed. Here all
the people, the artists held in the highest esteem the relationship that
exists between our past, our present and our future."[94]*

While the initial project shows nobility of purpose and intellectual zeal,
on the other hand lacks in foresight and contextualization of what
would constitute the subsoil and the contours of the new cities. In
the tragedy of the destruction it could paradoxically identified the op-
portunity of a reconstruction that was not only architectural but also
social and economical; There was the hope of a revolution that never
happened.
Artistic innovation, have not been matched usefully witch the services
of Gibellina. This goal was not reached and prevented to the interven-
tion to survive in an effective and positive way. Nore were have been
improved public connections and infrastructure. Today there is no

XXXIX_ Chiesa Madre, Ludovico quaroni

94_ Transcript of Arata Isozaki during the se-
cond edition of the Workshop Topography of
Trauma at the Fondazione Orestiadi Gibellina,
2010

adequate services that can support the arrival of tourists. One of the biggest failures is the incapacity to take advantage from the phenomenon and the impossibility in managing the visibility of the new Gibellina. The reconstruction was not enough to create new jobs and attract investors. "*This will remain a desert with many cathedrals, all empty*"[95]: these were the words of Gibellina's inhabitants, and unfortunately the prophecies seem to be true. The number of visits over the years has decreased inexorably, and the city today seems a ghost town. Signs of time on the architecture and streets make it unattractive from tourism. Gibellina is an empty city, desolate and abandoned by its inhabitants. They knew well that the most important thing was to give them jobs and services, rather than beautiful pieces of art. That would have been the only way to avoid emigration. Gibellina Nuova has deeply lost its population.[96] Gibellina needs a new phase of reconstruction that is not only useful to complete the architectures, There is the urgent need of a serious study that highlights the real problems and produce reliable results ensuring the new birth of the whole territory of Belice.

We must therefore investigate whether the intervention of Gibellina has been a total failure or if has some positive outcomes. And considering the buildings and works of art built to "no one", are we still really talking about architecture? It seems clear that the persecution of the new identity has only given outcome to something fake and unconvincing, both for inhabitants as for tourists. The entire structure of the artistic works is bumpy and difficult for the visitor to be followed. Difficulties are added by the general feeling of a precarious and dangerous place, clearly inadequate for a tourism revival.

Despite the award of the International Council of Museums in 2011 and an award from the National Critical to the theater in 2012[97], there was not any improvement and the degradation seems to be rapid and inexorable. Causes of the sad epilogue are also the values and theoretical apparatus that individual architects have given to the buildings, which dissolved because of the absence of users. They stand lifeless without function. In 2008, Stefano Boeri affirmed:

"I hope it does not become like the Giardino delle Civiltà in Zen of Palermo, that was supposed to collect the "turf "of all civilizations and is now just a pile of rubble and garbage."

95_ F. Merlo; L'utopia di Gibellina, un disastro spettrale; La Repubblica, August 14th 2011

96_ E. Cristallini, M. Fabbri, A. Greco; Gibellina una città per una società estetica; Gangemi Editore, Roma, p 72

97_ F. Merlo, Op.Cit 14 agosto 2011

Gibellina is a concrete demonstration of the failure and the presumption of which may be capable Italian architecture. Except the Cretto, everything else is unlivable, empty and decadent. The only way to save Gibellina seems to be the privatization of public spaces. The economic logic prevailed over an order of social needs, that probably have decreed failure. And here's the return of ruin. On the new and magnificent buildings of Gibellina the specter of the earthquake of the old city is back. The architecture without people, is destined to become a ruin, and it is clear that the award received and the articles in the newspapers are not enough to save Gibellina from his destiny. This condition is summed up by the reflection of Isozaki: "*The ruin is the future of our cities, and the cities of the future is itself a ruin.*"

The build of new artwork and new construction to enrich and update the artistic heritage of Gibellina is a possibility that has been evaluated, but in addition to the difficulty in obtaining funds, perhaps it would be more urgent to adjust what is already there and restore the decadent image of the city. This is the opinion of the curator Lucrezia De Domizio Durini (tireless worker and cultural point of reference for contemporary art in Italy and abroad), who simultaneously raises the need for the revival of artistic youth. Francesco Bonami, critic and international curator of contemporary art, sees the possibility of new ways in the recovery of Gibellina. Indeed it says that we should invest in facilities, cultural centers or museums that are able to ensure a continuous flow of tourists.

Today, what remains of the original Gibellina are just a few pieces of architecture destined to disappear, and with them the memory of the old village. The reconstruction of the city after the earthquake has produced the phenomenon of multiply the city: to the old center, ruined and abandoned, as been added the area of temporary housing and barracks, used in the immediate post-disaster, and the new town. The slums and tent camps were temporary in name only, and soon have taken on the features real architectural interventions. The new Gibellina follow the pattern of low-density on the basis of the garden city. The quality of construction is in general very poor. All new interventions are completely losing the identity. Gibellina, is a lucky accident that is isolated from the others. The choices of the mayor is measured with

XL_ Old city center, ruins, 2011

typical strategies of large urban centers and urban planning rather than the foundation of a new small town. Moreover, the importance of an identification with culture of the area it was fundamental. It was smbolically embodied in the recovery of the ancient Baglio Di Stefano near the perimeter of the new city in the contiguous territories of Santa Ninfa and Salemi. The Baglio, active as a cultural center and laboratory of culture and art, from the very first moment it has become de facto the "Old Town". This intervention is part of a series of strategies, aimed at preserving the memory of the historical tradition of the place.

The ruins of the old forgotten villages are collapsing under a real reappropriation of space by nature. Today they are places characterized by the so called Third Landscape. The unfinished reconstruction in Valle del Belice is one of the major obstacles to the development and rebirth of the area. It happens often that the new houses have arisen near the abandoned ruins preventing the resumption of normal activities, which are designed to cope with an unfinished hovering like the ghost of the tragedy. Emigration and weak economies have represent the main obstacle to the natural regeneration of society as well as the activities of the territory.[98] The reconstructions performed in the new towns have developed through similar dynamics in the reconstruction process but have pursued different purposes from Gibellina. In Montevago we can clearly distinguish the old center, treated as a monument, and the new buildings nearby. Today, the new urban area, due to the progressive extension, is spatially connected to the old area that is still used by the citizens. In this way the gap between old and new is deleted and Montevago looks honest in its integrity. There was specific set of tactics for the development of old suburbs and growth of the new urban center. The reconstruction in Santa Margherita, involved important dynamics focused to a new identification between inhabitants and environment and new architectures. The square becomes a symbolic place in which establish the mediation between old and new: a museum is built on the ruins of a fallen church, and another church has been realized.

98_ E. Cristallini, M. Fabbri, A. Greco; Gibellina una città per una società estetica; Gangemi Editore, Roma, p 72

The strong impact of a huge artistic project and the desire for redemption turned to be factors for a rupture of a historic identity, which requires a reconstruction it self. The research of the genius loci

was oriented to culture and art excluding other preexistences. Art, architecture and theater, have been chosen as main topic to founda new reality. From this mixing of styles, languages, and ideas emerge a crack in the formal coherence that undermines the idea of modernity. Excessive mixing , however, generates a sense of inappropriateness vagueness and superficiality. The fusion between art works and the urban village seems to have crossed the line where art gives its good contribution and starts to become harmful. The artistic interventions, which individually have a large value, turn to disturb each other due to excessive closeness or mixing. The art objects in Gibellina are often disruptive, because of their scale or due to their symbolic meaning, and in no way they are combined with a scale of the city and its in its daily activities. The concept of unity and homogeneity that was the basis of the intervention ends up looking exactly the antithesis of himself. A new fragmentation took place, this time caused by the exclusivity of the individual pieces of architecture, very different from each other.

XLI_ Ruins and nature, Gibellina 2011
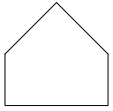
ARCHITECTURE AND ITS DISASTER

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

"Founded on a conversation cutted out from a classical past - humanistic and a post-apocalyptic vision of a world inhabited by the absence and uncertainty, his projects have been a progressive investigation through the different dimensions of contra-architecture. [...] Eisenman's work has moved from an initial confidence in the radical modernism up to the hypothesis of the failure of architecture".[99]
Anthony Vidler

99_ A. Vidler; *La deformazione dello spazio. Arte, Architettura e Disagio nella cultura moderna*; Postmedia Srl, Milano 2009

"Non di questo è fatta la città, ma di relazioni tra le misure del suo spazio e gli avvenimenti del suo passato".[100]
Italo Calvino

100_ I. Calvino, Zaira City, from Le Città Invisibili, Oscar Mondadori, 2008

The catastrophe inhibits or even erases the spatial and cultural identity of a place, alters deeply the space leaving an indelible scar in places and people. After the traumatic event, the tabula rasa is the only thing remained, on which rests a heavy absence of what has been destroyed. A physical and cultural void that leave the proof of the catastrophe: ruins, shred of the city. The catastrophe gives a shape to a new place where it is impossible to identify themselves, a new landscape in which reigns a dense and crippling sense of absence. Ruin, stands in the new order as a passive witness of destruction. The new order will cause inconvenience to the visitor who has no more the spatial coordinates hitherto known and is catapulted into a new order ruled by a giant void. This crippling discomfort produce a sense of alienation and fear, often visible after a bombing, after a fire or an earthquake. But what happens when is the architecture itself to be perceived as a catastrophe's invisible legacy? How is it possible that a new building is already in ruin? How can architecture inhibit the culture of a place, or change the characteristics of the space till the point of producing formal and cultural discontinuity like a proper disaster? What happens in the culture of a place where architecture creates

"shreds" in which people are not able to communicate? Associating architecture and destruction is unusual. However, going beyond the apparent contradiction, it is possible to discover that many examples of architecture are acting as disturbing elements that produce disorder and disruption. This character that makes architecture distinctive and "intrusive" in the best case it becomes his fortune. Architecture is absorbed by the urban order although it is clear that his generation is the product of new logic which is unknown to the reality that surround it. The new architecture is sometimes well accepted despite the controversy and debate that raises and becomes a particular object, a landmark, a new contemporary monument. In these cases, the disparity becomes a clear statement of intent and a new symbol. In some cases it produces the birth of a deeper identity that recognizes the new architecture as a representation of culture and identity of a place. Cities are full of symbols, which especially in the European scenario, are represented by existing historical reminiscent of glories from the past. In other cases, the symbol is a recent construction that embodies unequivocally the economic power of a country. Thinking about the tragedy of the Twin Towers in Manhattan in 2001, we still identify that architecture with the heart of modernity, we suddenly think about a symbol of the unstoppable growth and the power of New York City. Terrorists have carefully chosen their target, and in the architecture of Yamasaki Robertson they recognized the direct representation of the economic power of the city. The towers collapsed, and together with them, fell also the strength of a state and his aura of infallibility. When architecture becomes an icon different registers and cultural communication are involved: from literature to movies, photography, advertising, turning it to be a kind of synecdoche of the whole city. Omitting the horror and shock of the tragedy, the gigantic impact of the catastrophe is undeniable, and unexpectedly has helped to revive the image of New York, through a spirit of renovation and new energies. After a period of growth during eighties, the post-September 11 era begun a renewal period where financial assets was improved and the skyline has been enriched by new skyscrapers. New York today is not the one before 2001 due to the experience tragedy.

In the worst endings instead, the new architecture and the "uncanny" is rejected as a true foreign body within the urban layout. The new
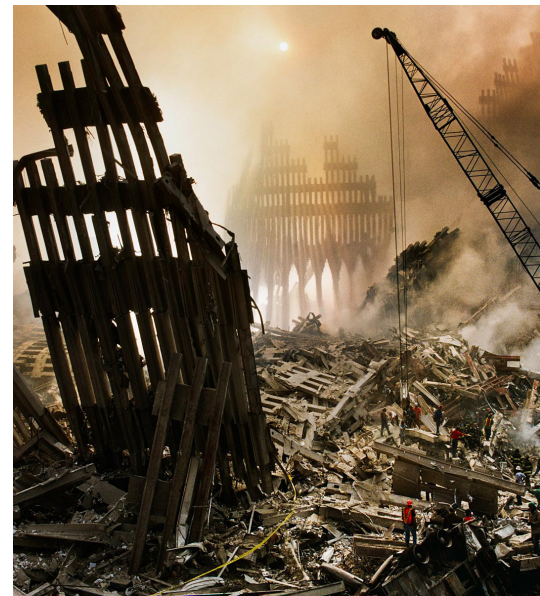
XLII_ World trade center, ruins.

objects in this case can cause ruptures. Due to careless economic strategies and policies, they are often not able to involve the population because a a lack of communication between artefact and community that end up becoming a drifting wrecks, excluded from the city's dynamics.

The "uncanny" becomes the subject for many philosophers and critics, and in the world of architecture is a topic that dealt with Vidler that enlighten the uneasiness of modern man in the metropolis. Vidler begins his reflection from the meaning of the word uncanny. Das Unehimliche, going back to Freud, is something that generates a state of malaise, of fear and deep anxiety, in a real dimension of discomfort and terror that occurs within the limits of sublime.

The uncanny in architecture becomes a tangible form and a real aesthetic category.[101] The discomfort and distress, manifests itself in art and architecture. It is related to big changes occurred in community. As Vidler said:

 "Landscapes of fear and topography of despair, are the result of the modern capitalist and technological development, from the metropolis to megalopolis and so on. These issues are considered in the context of an earlier and apparently triumphant urban planning and monumental modern architecture in their moment of greatest expansion and activity in emerging metropolis. They faced a crisis of identity, expressed not only by the social critic of the twentieth century, but also by the instability of its representation itself, by the abandonment of historical certainties of realism in favour of an often ambiguous abstraction."[102]

What causes the discomfort in humans is not so much the architecture in its final form, but the space that architectures determine. Considering the first psychopathologies of urban space, such as claustrophobia and agoraphobia, they appear when prospects and proportions of the city change rapidly, creating places where is difficult to see safe sedimented spaces. Camillo Sitte also questions the nature of what he calls "new pathologies of urban space" condemning such disproportions of the Ringstrasse in comparison with the more traditional composite spatial characteristics of piazza.[103] Sitte talk about a real fear and terror of the human who is about to cross a parade ground,

101_ *"Il perturbante [...] appartiene alla sfera dello spaventoso, di ciò che ingenera angoscia e orrore, ed è altrettanto certo che in questo termine non viene usato in senso nettamente definibile, tanto che quasi sempre coincide con ciò che è generalmente angoscioso"*
S. Freud; Das Unheimliche (1919) trad. it. Perturbante, in Opere, vol IX, Boringhieri, Torino 1977, p81
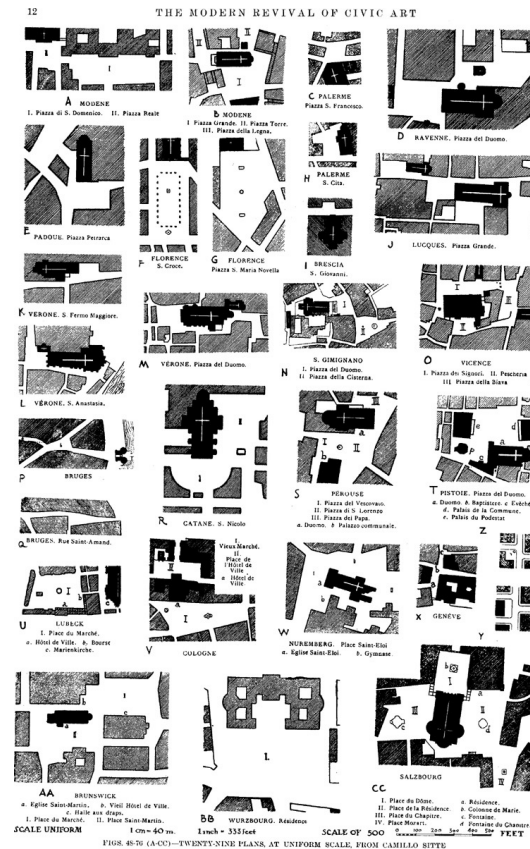
XLIII_ "City Planning According to Artistic Principles" published in 1889

102_ A. Vidler; La deformazione dello spazio. Arte, Architettura e Disagio nella cultura moderna; Postmedia Srl, Milano 2009, p12

103_ C. Sitte, L'arte di costruire le città, a cura di Luigi Dodi, Antonio Vallardi Editore, Milano 1953

and surprisingly, we can see that the discomforts described, are not too dissimilar from those who live with the witnesses of a catastrophe, which destroyed familiar places, reshaping urban space in new voids and rubble. Destruction and built generate similarly inadequacy and discomfort, and both refer to disproportions: on one hand and ruin and the post-catastrophic void, and on the other an avant-garde urban architectural that model the space of the city. This shows how modernity and the avant-garde declined in architectural forms can, in some cases, act against the ultimate goal of architecture which supposed to create spaces for humans. Examples of this substantial failure seem not to exist in a certain field of architecture of the past, and instead, seems to appear frequently in our present.

The modern and contemporary architecture are witnesses of delicate moments of crisis and transformation that call into question the role of architecture in a world where communication has become more and more immaterial input, and where habits are increasingly linked to global categories rather than to particular realities. Analyse architecture today means having necessarily to take into account the media culture and consumerism that surround us. Since the advent of modernism, architecture has changed significantly, it has evolved together with history, it went through wars, economic booms and huge cultural revolutions. Architect's role has changed also because the world in which he lives has changed. Redefining what architecture means today and what are architect's responsibilities, is undoubtedly a complex and controversial action. But it is a substantial step that has to be done: it will certify, in fact, that we are experiencing a show of architecture encoded by specific rules. Architect profession has changed significantly due to the flourishing "culture of images" and due to his progressive involvement in the so-called star-system. There is no novelty in the collaboration between architecture and politics, and image worship has always had an important role, but what is changed is the transformation of the nature of this tendency.

Architecture had to deal with the crumbling of such cultural boundaries coming from last century, yielding at new pressures generated by the contemporary world, including business, marketing, fashion, media, entertainment and advertising. Architecture is now related with a new cult of image, which assume different connotations forgetting other

traditional aspects of architecture. Contemporary world is nourished by two-dimensional products, suitable for magazines, media communication, and Internet.[104] Likewise, architecture seems to reflect this abstractness of communication with its consequent intellectual dematerialization. Architecture becomes a slogan, logo, and the reality is corporate, branding, shopping, real estate.[105]

Just looking around we can see how architecture is part of a system that is easily related to the world of advertising and marketing. Increasingly, big companies or even entire cities, link their name to the one from international architecture. Architecture seems to be relevant only if inserted in a context of successful business operations and marketing. In this new world the debate proposed by Sitte on harmony, of proportions, and quality is unheard.
If architecture has a new face, so does the architect, who has to face with these new media processes. The Archistar, using a term coined by Lo Ricco and Micheli, is dazzled by photographers flashes, is busy in signing autographs, and not infrequently is enrolled by the world of fashion and design.[106]

Paradoxically, we are living an era where new buildings could scare more than ruins. Even if we do not notice, our cities are full of ruins, even in the absence of an earthquake or a fire. Urban ruins are an emblematic symbol of our contemporaneity. They are abandoned buildings, obsolete or simply part of a surpassed way of being city.

"What a ruin is after all? It is a human construction abandoned to nature, and one of the ruins' features in the city is their wild appearance: they are places full of promise and unknowns, with all their epiphanies and their dangers."[107]
Rebecca Solnit

Ruins are what remains of the city, ruin is the so-called "left over".[108] The urban ruin is relegated to a place outside the city's economic and cultural horizons. As stated by Cecla in *Contro l'architettura*:

"Rykwert individuava la carenza dell'architettura contemporanea

104_ F. La Cecla; Contro l'architettura; Bollati Boringhieri Editore, 2008, p37

105_ F. La Cecla;
Bollati Boringhieri Editore, 2008, p29

106_ G. Lo Ricco, S. Micheli; Lo spettacolo dell'architettura. Profilo dell'archistar; Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, Milano 2003

107_ R. Solnit, Wanderlust. A history of Walking, Penguin Books, 2001

108_ F. La Cecla; Contro l'architettura; Bollati Boringhieri Editore, 2008, p29

nell'incapacità di quest'ultima di produrre simboli condivisi, nell'aver ridotto il sistema simbolico del mondo costruito ad un grado elementare."

The reflection moves then to architecture's inadequacy in the complexity of today's society. Architecture must interact with a culture which is more and more diverse and complex. Architecture must also deal with the seductive veneer of fame and first-page of architecture magazines. Magazines seem fundamental in stating the value and success of a project.

Architecture manifest its disaster in its inappropriateness of forms and uses, in its lack of proportion and in being clumsy towards the delicacy and variety of the needs of the place where it is located. Catastrophe an architecture that is dazzled by 'ὐβρις, by a frantic anxiety of appearing which gives vertigos. It is declined in a formal arrogance that forgot the importance of measure and sensitivity, a trend that considers anonymity the worst thing ever. The product of this new philosophy is a building inappropriate in the design, in strategy or size, very close to disaster. Architecture becomes the negative celebration of the idea of modernity. Unfortunately, "catastrophic" projects in this sense, arise numerous in our cities and suburbs. Architecture is the logo of the power of a city, is the direct expression of successful economic choices.

That architectural 'ὐβρις, is not astonishing if located in an important financial center of a eleven million inhabitants city. Surprisingly, when the arrogance of a project happen in a small town it provokes huge interest. This is what happened for the City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela by Peter Eisenman.

Eisenman, architect from Newark (1932), is quoted in the interesting description of archistar mentioned by Gabriella Lo Ricco and Silvia Micheli.[109] Due to the fragmented forms of his projects he is addressed as a deconstructivist architect even if Eisneman himself avoid this definition. He had a rich history of professional controversies that have always kept him under the academic audience attention. His theories on architecture tend to achieve autonomy from context, in a constant effort to liberate the form from any kind of meaning. He was a member

109_ G. Lo Ricco, S. Micheli; Lo spettacolo dell'architettura. Profilo dell'archistar; Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editori, Milano 2003, p76

of the New York Five, five architects (Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, Richard Meier, and Michael Graves) whose work appeared in an exhibition at MoMA in 1967. He represented the soul of the group and his theoretical writings put in good light its fight against the conventions and clichés to create autonomous and self-referential works, created only by logical and intellectual process without any relation with the everyday reality. The idea of autonomy of form historical contingencies is the reason why Eisenman has long been linked to Aldo Rossi, but with different outcomes. His experience in design activity is based on processuality such as scaling and folding and on the fiction as new history of the place.

"Every semblance of unity in origins and in epilogues, or chronological sequences should be considered with special attention, looking for any lapses, faults and irreconcilable propositions in apparently fluid processes and continuous of transformation and development. This approach seems particularly relevant in Peter Eisenman's texts and projects, who seems to avoid, remove or deliberately circumvent the issues of origin and development, beginning and ending, form and content, as a way to deny the history of the encoded architectural tradition." [110]

110_ A. Vidler; Il perturbante dell'Architettura, Saggi sul disagio nell'età contemporanea; Einaudi editore, Torino 2006, p130

Anthony Vidler

The typical Eisenman's strategies and logical design emerge in one of his recent projects : the City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela. The project is ambitious and wants to bring together the Galician culture and new artistic and cultural ferment of the region. The intervention, of which the municipality is proud, is properly advertised and initially well accepted by citizens. A small part of the project was inaugurated in January 2011, but the remaining part was inaugurated later because of the slowness of construction sites. Santiago de Compostela is the spiritual symbol for thousands of pilgrims, and is a World Heritage Site that paradoxically risks to be damaged by the awkward presence of this enormous architecture.

Santiago is a medieval city and has always had an important role in

XLIV_ Santiago city centre from satellite

Immagini ©2014 Cnes/S

Galician and European Christianity. His fame came from James the Great, apostle and martyr dead and buried in Jerusalem and whose remains, according to legend, came miraculously in Spain. Santiago is made by narrow streets and cobbled alleyways, buildings that rarely exceed three floors, picturesque views, and the all city gives the feeling of being made from a single material: granite. Streets, squares, monasteries and churches, create a vernacular landscape. Compostela is the arrive for pilgrims and the cathedral, the tallest building in the city, is the end of the road.

In the eighties and nineties Santiago de Compostela has been modernized with intelligence under the leadership of the Socialist mayor Xerardo Estévez, who attempted to achieve a balance between the protection of buildings and historic spaces and the creation of new cultural infrastructures. Many competitions for designing of institutional buildings were organized, and the most important was the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea (1989-1994) by Álvaro Siza, who was able to remedy the degradation of the neighborhood taking in careful consideration the historical heritage, the original tracks of city streets, and the proportions of convents and religious institutions that arise in the immediate vicinity, in an ideal continuity with the past. The aim, as Siza said, was to *"rediscover a previously existing order that was destroyed."*

XLV_ Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, 1989-1994

At the end of nineties, local government under the presidency of Manuel Fraga Iribarne forward the proposal of the construction of the Ciudad de la Cultura which would have benn placed on top of Mount Gaias, two miles far from the old city and its cathedral. This project, which can be defined by its megalomaniac proportions and costs, provided a Museum of Galicia, a library, a center for new technology, and even a 700,000 square meters concert hall. Influenced by the international impact and success gained from Gehry's project in Bilbao, the same logic seemed appropriate to be followed, trying to "sell" not only the cultural center, but the whole Galicia region. This legitimate attempt did not have the happy ending of Bilbao. Thus, following the logic of branding, before a good project, there is the need to find a famous architect. Members of the star system like Steven Holl, Rem Koolhass, Daniel Libeskind, Ricardo Boffil, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Jean Nouvel and Dominique Perrault were all invited to the competition.

The majority of the jury members wanted an iconic building, a symbol of culture for Galicia, and was especially important that this had to be designed by an international star. So Eisenman was the winner *"for his conceptual singularity, plasticity and for its exceptional harmony with the environment."* The project was presented with a beautiful wooden maquette that included the surroundings and the old center. At that scale, and with a single material, the image of an artificial landscape cut from the streets was quite attractive and well harmonized with the curved lines of the hills.

Eisenman observed the surroundings and was inspired by the shell, symbol of Santiago de Compostela (and of the pilgrimage also), and by the medieval layout of the city center. The final project masterplan was designed using a schematic process in which takes place an interaction between the layout of the historic center and the overlapping orthogonal grids that gradually distort the plan of the city. The new order is superimposed on the old one, which overlaps the stylized shape of the shell. Buildings must seem like dug on the ground, setting an urban landscape composed by a mix of buildings and topography. Eisenman's design was inspired by the ley lines, energy lines or spiritual lines, which go through the majority of the most important holy places in the world. Through the ley lines Eisenman defines a relationship between the site and buildings, and a correspondence between the internal and the external matrix. In order to solve the problem of the determination of the vertical dimension given by the overlapping grids, Eisenman studied a lines regulatory system: horizontal isostatic lines flow from the ground up to the roof creating a series of vertical offsets. These lines do not evolve simply by rotating the Cartesian grid, but also by simultaneously rotations in several points, producing a dynamic transformation of the ground floor of the site along the third dimension. Eisenman produces a complex interplay of overlapping geometries infused with unreadable associations and intellectual speculations. Eisenman's projects are often presented in the form of complex graphs and self-analytical models aimed to a formulation of a counter- monumental model. His architecture is based not only on the superposition of several analytical layers, but also on the space's fragmentation. The grids which he proposes often have no value in terms of structure related to architecture. Lines and grids have a

XLVI_ Ciudad de la Cultura, Wooden maquette

XLVII_ Library

self-importance and impose themselves as a picture of the origins of architecture, originally based on the geometrization of landscape. Grids are often in contradiction one to each other and remain latent conflicts that arise when they have to occupy the same areas.[111] The overabundant amount of geographical references, and spiritual and symbolic gestures are declined in large territorial scale. However, due to the scale and complexity, they turn to annihilate their power and value. The Eisenman's reasoning complexity and the use of seductive designs produce a computerized forms far from the existing proportions and the real charm of Santiago de Compostela. The City of Culture rises from the top of Mount Gaiás as a new century architectural monument. The project consists of six buildings, connected by streets and squares, all equipped with the most advanced technologies. There are services and activities spaces for the memory and conservation of heritage, and buildings for research, production and exhibition in the field of literature philosophy, music, theatre, dancing, visual arts, and audiovisual communication. The Ciudad de la Cultura consists of a library (17,372 sq m) an archive (14,149 square meters), the Center of Music and Performing Arts (which reaches a height of 42.5 m) and an International Centre of Art. The Library, according to the project will host a million books becoming the leader of the Galician library system. Its function is to collect and preserve the bibliographic heritage of Galicia. The building consists of a large reading room on several levels, which can be accessed from the colonnaded street that shares with the according to the project the Archive of Galicia. The south oriented building, stands in front of the Hejduk towers and shares with the Library the pedestrian walkway that provides access to the opposite side. Inside there is a big reading room, and an exhibition space. Opposite to the entrance, there is an area called "The Road to Santiago" used as an exhibition space. When the competition was announced, the "folds" were a trendy architectural theme and Eisenman often cited the theories of Gilles Deleuze about "*le pli*."[112]

"Behind the smokescreen of his pretentious theorising, Eisenman is actually a formalist who raid the sources and manipulates forms just for pleasure, leaving aside the issue of content."[113]
William Jr. Curtis

111_ "Leggendo le griglie schizofreniche di Eisenman in questa luce potremmo essere tentati di vedere nell'unione di frammenti in conflitto la prova di un'evocazione deliberata fi un'affezione che opera secondo tutti i "metodi" paranoici a fine di svelare una "realtà" inquietante e disturbata. [...] Eisenman sottolinea la natura automatica della nascita delle sue griglie – una trascrizione automatica di precedenti mappe geometriche - e l'evidente piacere con cui egli manipola conflitti in questo "reale", coma una schizofrenia consapevole. " A. Vidler; Il perturbante dell'Architettura, Saggi sul disagio nell'età contemporanea; Einaudi editore, Torino 2006, p158-159
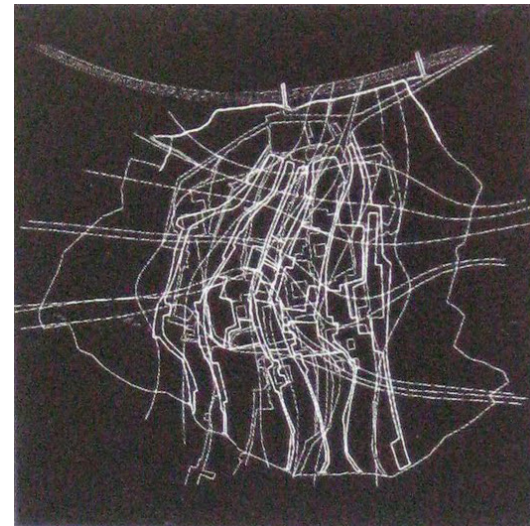
XLVIII_ Concept, layer superimposition

112_ G. Deleuze; La piega. Leibniz e il barocco, (1988), tr. Davide Tarizzo, Einaudi, Torino 2004\v

113_ William Jr. Curtis, da Il Giornale dell'Architettura numero 92, marzo 2011

"Instead of conceiving the soil as a backdrop against which define the building, we have generated a condition in which the soil can rise becoming a building and the building slip below the soil. It is a new urban typology".
Peter Eisenman

At first sight, what is most evident is not the real architectural value, but its huge dimension, or rather, its disproportion compared to the size and structure of Santiago. (The City of Culture is as big as the historical center). Because of general quality and size of the design it is easy to associate Eisenman's project with a land art project made by Burri in Gibellina after the earthquake (Grande Cretto 1985-1989). The realization of the project required the movement of large amounts of soil despite its "topographic sensitivity". The folds that were harmonious and delicate in the maquette, in reality were made with wide \s that are not similar to the idea of abstraction that was shown in the computerized drawings.[114] One of the positive choices was the material, a quote of architectural heritage of Santiago. The curves were paneled with granite. Unfortunately it was not coming from Galizia region, but from Brazil. Eisenman apparently failed in the translation of his own intentions and the tridimensional space is not convincing. Once the City of Culture was built, the appearance of the project clearly deviates from the model presented in the competition. The big glass walls were more similar to a commercial architecture rather than a cultural center. Inside spaces are complex and do not reflect the clarity that Eisenman wanted to create outside. The atrium has a video in which Eisenman is presenting the project: *"The City of Culture of Galicia will help you to understand what is its place in the world, will be an icon for Compostela, remembers the shell of St. James, reverberates the local landscape of granite and traditional glass facades... ".*
It is transformed into a real talking architecture, which is the advertising of itself. The architecture is sponsored and publicized by a video and its creator in presenting a product like a common seller. In conceptual terms there is no difference between the video of Eisenman and the advertising of a car. Due to the *"collision of epidermal materials and details,"* the visitor is confused and it is difficult to understand
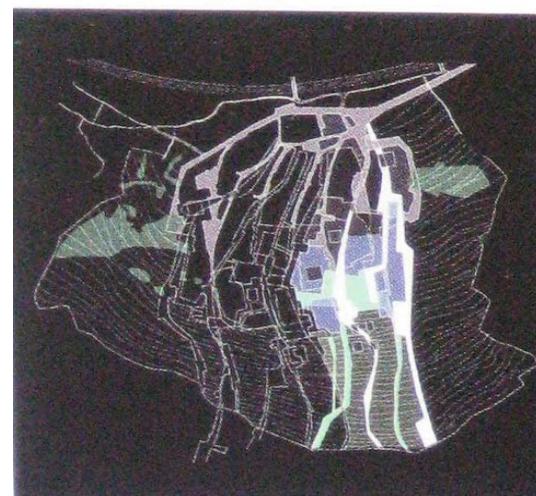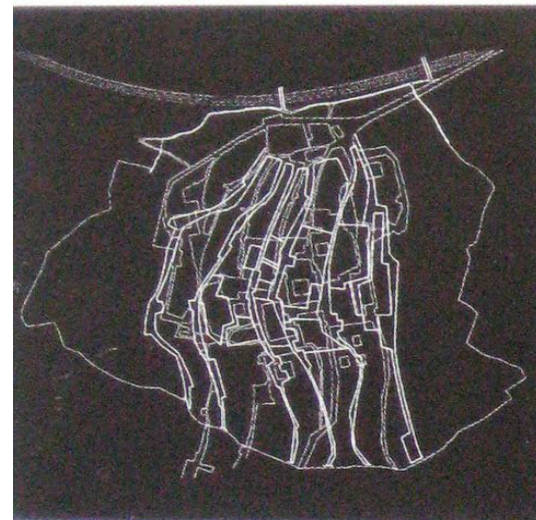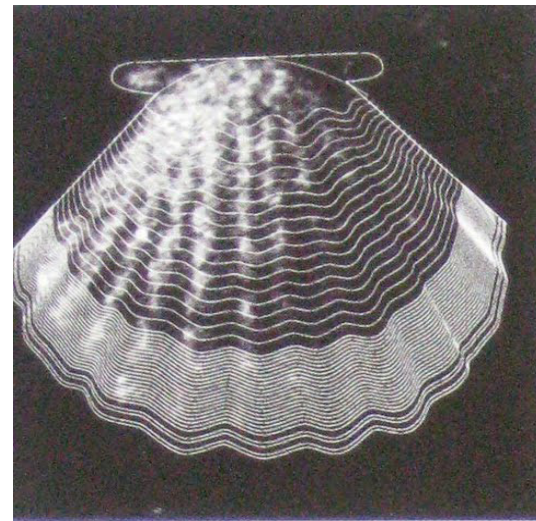
XLIX_ Concept design of Eisenman's project.

114_ William Jr. Curtis, da Il Giornale dell'Archi-tettura numero 92, marzo 2011

whether it is a shopping center or a cultural center. The message is not clear and the aspects of vernacular architecture remain completely obscure.

"The problem is that globalization has affected the way we think about architecture. There was before a sort of regional architecture that had to do with things like the climate, the lifestyle and habits, the local iconography and so on. All these facts have been absorbed by local media, and so today in Bilbao [just to name a well-known example] there is a Frank Gehry building that has nothing to do [...] with local materials: titanium does not have nothing to do with the local reference but it is commonly accepted thanks to the media, as the correct choice. There is no longer any substance in the local. Therefore, architecture, which usually was used to take care of the context, meanings and aesthetics, must critically rethink about its role today, its place in space, in time, in shape. Today, architecture has very little to do with the world we live in." [115]

Peter Eisenman

115_ Il carattere critico dell'architettura. Peter Eisenman in un colloquio con Günter Uhlig, Domus n. 824 marzo 2000

From this statement Eisenman shows the deep rift between two different ways of doing architecture. No matter what a right way or a wrong way of doing architecture is, however, there are projects that "work" and projects that "do not work". This is undeniable. Innovation and the charm of the archistar have worked well in Bilbao, but in this case it seems that the same success is difficult to be replyed. Many of the projects presented to the competition were discarded though they were very interesting, like the project by Manuel Gallego Jorreto, a local architect. He was perhaps more able to interpret the true identity of Santiago and Galicia. His project was one of the best in understanding the site program. But its echo would not exceeded the boundaries of the region and it would not have been heard from the rest of the world. Today, from a satellite picture we can see the awkwardness of the project compared to the characteristics of the context, the sinuous image of the wooden model is lost and what is left seems to be like landed on the top of the hill without any care of landscape. The distance between the old city center and City of Culture in terms of design and materials is clear: the organic medieval streets are not related to

L_ Costruction site

the large cracks between the buildings of the new architecture, which appear to be independent entities, too big to talk to each other. The project is more near to the image of big waves covered by granite and glass, nothing seems to be in harmony with the green hills, nor with the intimacy and spirituality of the authentic stone architecture of Santiago.

The catastrophe linked to this architecture is in creating a place far away from human, or a place that lacks of cultural coordinates. The wealth of intellectual speculation conducted by Eisenman, unfortunately loses its effectiveness and is not visible.

Kevin Lynch has raised the need to have and recognizable coordinates and landmarks within a city. He affirmed that references are essential for citizens in order to be able to read and understand theyr city. The ability to orient must be immediate. For that reason are commonly used that elements that clearly represent community or historical and cultural memory of a place. Only in this way the understanding of symbols becomes immediate and effective. As Lynch affirms the building has to ensure a cultural enrichment. There must be an immediate recognition between the user and the building, a phenomenon which guarantees a good perception of the space. But we must not fall into simplistic solutions in a trivial interpretation of architecture. The declination orientation and cultural coordinates in a building, should not be a constraint nor inhibition of the design creativity. It is a challenge, an arduous task that is fulfilled only through the constant monitoring and verification of all parts that contribute to the creation of an architectural space.

The design of the Ciudad de la Cultura, is a clear manifestation of the problem of making contemporary architecture and is certainly not the only project with a controversial result. Similarly we can refer to the giant intervention by Nyemeier in Brasilia, which was protagonist of a gradual depopulation after the first few years of its propaganda, being today a city full of the "uncanny" which is manifested in the huge squares and boulevards, and in the extraneousness in architectural languages created artificially and suddenly landed in the plateau of Goiás state. The design approaches can be very different and none of these can be defined correct or wrong, otherwise it would fall into a

LI_ View, inside the project area
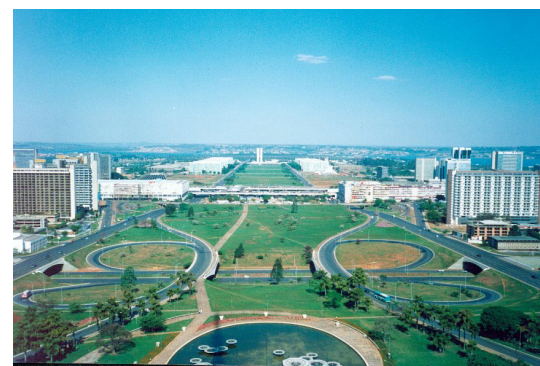
LII_ View, Brasilia.

sterile theoretical debate without end. Architect has to solve a serious and difficult task, and can not rely on always verified rules or protocols. Vidler suggests a similarity that effectively describe the condition of the architect in the whirl of the modern world:

"Contemporary architecture, considered in the general sense of post-modernism art, seems more and more a slave of the dilemma in which we find Alice in Wonderland while playing croquet with the Queen: Alice knows the name of the game, but there seems to be no fixed rules and too complicate things, tools are moving continuously and randomly: the flamingo-bats, hedgehog-balls and arch- soldiers. What was once an activity subjected to categorical rules that allow to divide equally wins and losses, luck and skill, victory or defeat, is now fully subjected to chaos, without any certainty and its foreseeable consequences."[116]

116_ A. Vidler; Il perturbante dell'Architettura, Saggi sul disagio nell'età contemporanea; Einaudi editore, Torino 2006, p113

Nothing is certain and the failure seems to be just around the corner. For this reason in order to avoid the catastrophe, it is necessary to take into account in addition to the economic and political dynamics that feed a project, even a much more complex basement, a delicate system of checks and balances that reside in the culture of the place. The genius loci have and the lessons of vernacular architecture can be extra ingredient for the construction of new architectural features that show their modernity in the ability to offer something more than the mere exercise of form or the use of technologically advanced materials. The Eisenman's "unburied" buildings seem to embody the unheimlich mentioned by Freud, deliberately going against architecture and trying to create a monumentality that is a-monumental at the same time.

How to avoid the catastrophe architecture then? Create high quality architecture in this swirl of technology, progress, economy and the media communication is undoubtedly a complex work. The success of the project do not seem to depend upon abstruse intellectual speculations or specific logic design, but can be found through understanding the complexity of the elements that are unique and unrepeatable in their specificity. Elements that can not be ignored and that must be treated with an honest study of the context. However, the so-called "white elephants" are seductive attractors for economic developments and a profitable gain in popularity with their intent to become slo-

gans. The disaster is the project that "is not working". To forestall the catastrophe there is the need keep strongly in mind all the goal and maintain sensitivity, control and measure necessary to the decree the success even when the patina of magazines will vanish and the spotlight will be turned off.

Parlando di catastrofi si finisce inevitabilmente a parlare di tracce. Segni che abitano nei luoghi e nelle persone e che non godono di codificazioni univoche e immediate. Le tracce dopo un disastro sono dei pezzi di un passato andato in frantumi, sono i segni delle cicatrici rbane che rientrano nell'economia semiotica della città. L'arduo compito dell'architettura e della politica sta nel saper gestire le tracce, nascondendole, cancellandone o talvolta esibendole e trasformandole e conservandole. I modi di agire nei confronti delle tracce possono essere molteplici e non esiste un manuale di istruzioni che dica cosa è giusto fare. La difficoltà sta nello scorgere nell'infinità di reinterpretazioni possibili quella, o quelle, che diano nuova linfa ai luoghi, che inneschino processi di arricchimento culturale, che diano possibilità di crescita e che conservino il passato come una chiave che apre le porte del futuro.

Le tracce possono essere trasformate, ripristinate, rimosse, restaurate, dimenticate e contraffatte, rientrando a far parte di un linguaggio che codifica la sintassi urbana e il sistema valoriale di un popolo che conserva nella memoria i segni dell'evento catastrofico che ha investito la città. La catastrofe viene inclusa nelle città in vari modi e con esiti differenti. La catastrofe è già presente quando si parla di una previsione di essa, quando la città è costretta a ipotizzare il disastro e le sue energie sono impiegate nel far fronte all'imprevisto e a combattere contro di esso pur nella sua assenza. La catastrofe è sempre evocata nell'assetto programmatico delle città e nella progettazione che si pongono il problema della gestione dell'emergenza e delle strategie di controllo biopolitico della vita urbana. Dopo il compimento del cataclisma, e la presa di coscienza dell'immenso cambiamento che si è verificato la fase della ricostruzione si manifesta come un delicato momento di riflessione e di azione. Il momento post-catastrofico si trova in un paradosso dato dall'assenza. Si può pensare in un primo momento che l'annientamento fisico della città determini un conseguente e pericoloso oblio e una smemorizzazione dei luoghi, quando invece il compito della ricostruzione prevede, in parte, di ripristinare tale me-

moria e permettere che essa rimanga viva nel tempo. Ma la catastrofe genera da sé una memoria che si manifesta nelle tracce dell'evento distruttivo, e che propone sia negli edifici che nei luoghi una reinterpretazione di ciò che era prima e che adesso mostra il passaggio dell'evento traumatico. La ricostruzione maldestra volendo ripristinare una memoria che potrebbe andare perduta, rischia di annientare per sempre le tracce prodotte dal cataclisma cancellando i segni di un evento irripetibile. La difficoltà sta nell'operare una distinzione e spesso nel saper reinventare il valore semantico che queste tracce assumono, un valore mutevole, che cambia a seconda delle scelte della politica, e delle sedimentazioni storiche su cui ogni città si fonda. La ricostruzione è una pratica estetica in quanto ricostruisce fisicamente l'identità di una città, ma anche etica in quanto consente una rielaborazione del lutto e del trauma e avvia la città verso un processo di guarigione. Le catastrofi segnano i momenti di profonda difficoltà delle città, sottolineano spesso la loro inadeguatezza e la vulnerabilità del proprio essere un sistema complesso e vitale. L'architettura durante l'esperienza del trauma, che sia opera dell'uomo o della natura, si anima di vita propria e si ribella al progetto e alle regole secondo cui è stato generato. Assume un'identità autonoma al di fuori delle dinamiche umane della città, e si avvicina alle logiche del mondo naturale e biologico. Diventa un oggetto estetico che assume nuove forme e significati precluso da ogni tipo di interpretazione legata alla lettura dell'architettura che tenderebbe ad analizzarlo come un insieme di geometrie stabili e come contenitore di attività. Dopo la distruzione si assiste ad un progresso filosofico post-traumatico accompagnato da una rapida evoluzione che coinvolge ogni tipo di conoscenza ed esperienza del fare città. Solo dopo un trauma si riescono ad osservare slanci di tale livello e in brevi periodi di tempo. La pace, la quiete e l'ordine rappresentano qualità indispensabili per la vita delle città, ma è inevitabile notare che le maggiori città del passato, e anche del nostro presente, abbiano attraversato enormi momenti di crisi e che la loro forza sia stata determinata proprio grazie all'aver vissuto il trauma in prima persona. Ogni città convive con le difficoltà e, alcune più di altre, si sono trovate ad affrontare alcune fra le pagine più tristi della nostra storia. Ma le catastrofi non sono vane, portano insegnamento, formano l'esperienza delle città e producono sviluppo. La catastrofe

è piuttosto l'afasia, il vuoto tra una parola e l'altra, il sussulto e l'incapacità di completare una frase, lo stallo e l'interruzione del ritmo. La catastrofe dell'uomo è quando egli, non decidendo, decide di non fare. Se la catastrofe è lo stallo, l'afasia, il vuoto, la tabula rasa, tutto ciò può essere ricondotto all'immagine dell'immobilità dell'essere parmenideo, alla pagina bianca sulla storia che Hegel identifica con la felicità, al momento in cui il direttore d'orchestra solleva la bacchetta e i musicisti trattengono il fiato prima di cominciare. La catastrofe, dramma collettivo, ci ricorda comunque di una ciclicità naturale di vita e morte, che esiste ogniqualvolta l'uomo è andato ad occupare lo spazio fisico attraverso la costruzione. La catastrofe non è che un altro nome della realtà ferma e immutabile; non è che un altro nome della perfezione. Non quando si parla, non quando si comunica, non quando vi è circolazione di idee e progetti si ha l'equazione pensiero=linguaggio=essere; bensì nell'attimo in cui tutto viene sospeso e tutto è una cosa sola, cioè il nulla. L'evento catastrofico non è la rottura di quest'equazione, la rottura è vita, è rinnovamento ed opportunità per gli spazi dell'uomo.

La buona riuscita di tutti gli investimenti, dei flussi di denaro e risorse convogliati nella costruzione di nuove identità, dipende da innumerevoli variabili ed esternalità, che possono allo stesso tempo dunque comprometterne il successo.

Ogni tipo di catastrofe vissuta andrà mappata a sangue sulla propria pelle, a scavare nella carne, come traccia indelebile. Nella confusione della città, nella perdita di ogni traccia di memoria, è sulla propria pelle che si deve incidere quanto ci mostra la natura; è su ogni piega del corpo che si deve tracciare a caratteri indelebili il proprio memento mori.

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