

Literary Traces, Dreamlike Traces. The Ideal City and the Invention of Archaeology*

Original

Literary Traces, Dreamlike Traces. The Ideal City and the Invention of Archaeology* / Caliarì, P.F., Cattiodoro, S.. - ELETTRONICO. - (2026), pp. 38-49. (CITY RENEWAL AND URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY. The morfphological values of city traces. BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS Naples (ITA) 19-21 February 2026).

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/3012412 since: 2026-06-24T20:01:53Z

Publisher:

U+D Editions

Published

DOI:

Terms of use:

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

Publisher copyright

(Article begins on next page)

THEORY

T_Theory of city's interpretation

T.1 Theory of urban form

T.2 Composition of urban orders

T.3 Ancient city/contemporary city

T.4 Theories and methods of morphological analysis in the historical cities



Literary Traces, Dreamlike Traces

The Ideal City and the Invention of Archaeology*

Pier Federico Caliarì¹, Silvia Cattiodoro²

¹ Department of Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, Polytechnic of Turin, Italy

² Department of Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, University of Palermo, Italy

Email: ¹ pier.caliari@polito.it, ² silvia.cattiodoro@unipa.it

Keyword: Form and Trace, The ancient Theatre, Invention of Archaeology

Conference theme: Theory of city's interpretation. Theory of urban form

Abstract. The form of the ideal city in its fifteenth-century iteration fundamentally coincides with the construction of an archaeological city, wherein the idea of Antiquity is measured not against the truth of material traces, but against a literature of traces suspended between source material and imagination. Yet, albeit devoid of the physical and graphic reassurance of authentic vestiges, the dreamlike act linking data interpretation to the principle of verisimilitude marks the very inception of the Western Classical narrative. This narrative matured within a refined society twelve hundred years later, where an extremely select milieu of intellectuals “trans-ported” the Greco-Roman Hellenistic experience into the present through the filter of the *longue durée*, rewriting its contents through new devices of formal processing aimed at constructing a new world – one endowed with a language that transfigured ancient grammar. Among these devices, the theatre constitutes the crucial interpretative mechanism of form (space) and life (action). Within it, representation becomes narration through a generative, dreamlike act. The backdrop-city against which the ideal impulse of the Renaissance contends – based on the literary traces of treatises and the always-allographic interpretation of ancient sources – is the Gothic city. Here, the presence of ancient artefacts is legible primarily as a palimpsest: a superposition and co-presence of elements that allowed Antiquity to survive, on the one hand, by being infiltrated by the Modern (the long Middle Ages) and, simultaneously, by infiltrating the urban structures of the Modern itself. The relationship between the ideal city and the invention of traces is the subject of this essay, developed through a specific concept of Antiquity – understood not as a historical phase contained within a Delta T, but as the temporal extension of an archaeology of invention, which is nothing other than the archaeology of architects.

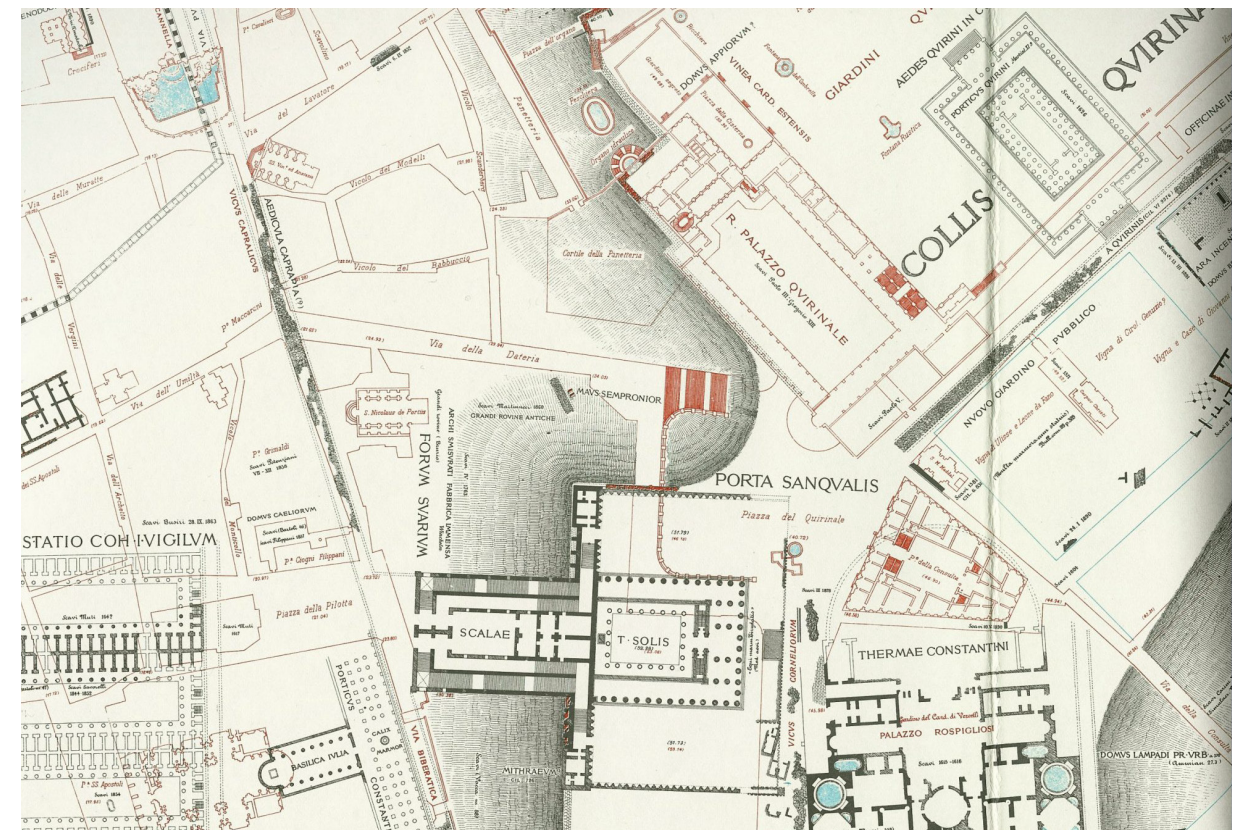
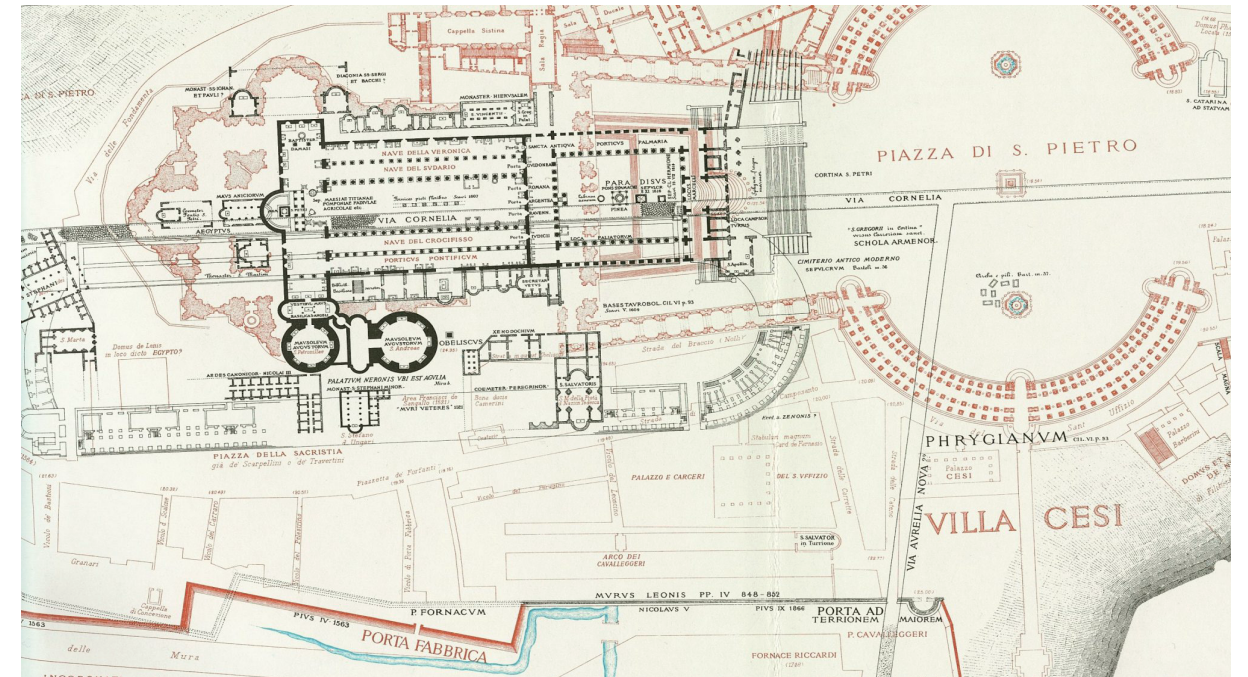


Figura 1. Rodolfo Lanciani, *Forma Urbis Romae*, Plate XIII (St. Peter's and the Vatican Area).

Figura 2. Rodolfo Lanciani, *Forma Urbis Romae*, Plate XVI (Quirinal, Temple of the Sun, Baths of Constantine).

What interests us about the concept of the trace? Why does it fascinate us more than the whole, despite constituting a partial legacy corrupted by time? And what is the aesthetic significance of the trace within creative cerebral activity? Indeed, one could answer these initial queries simply by stating that the trace constitutes the first principle of investigation – the first step towards the recognition of a foundational act. By “trace”, we actually mean a virtual whole that is absent, which originates a process of objectification that does not escape the will to form (*Kunstwollen*) inherent in every action of architectural thought, whether design-oriented or reconstructive. It is precisely for this reason that the Ideal City interests us in its threefold manifestation of Urbino, Baltimore, and Berlin: fundamentally because within it, traces have been transfigured into perfect, self-contained buildings (the triumphal arch, the amphitheatre, the centrally-planned sacred edifice), as if the Ideal City constituted a sort of regeneration of all possible traces in a sublime recapitulation – as Jorge da Burgos would declaim within the scriptorium of the abbey library in *The Name of the Rose*. Moreover, it is Umberto Eco, at the novel's closing, who evokes the famous passage from Bernard of Cluny's *De contemptu mundi*, which reads: «Stat Roma pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus» (Eco, 1980); something curiously asymmetrical when contrasted with «Roma quanta fuit, ipsa ruina docet» (Serlio, 1537). On one side, a legacy of naked names; on the other, ruins that harken back to pristine grandeur. In this essay, suspended ideally between these two mottoes, the authors examine the transfiguration of the trace, its transformation between physical presence and the enigma of absence, represented as a potential totality. Consequently, we shall investigate the dissolution of the physical, material trace, and its subsequent re-materialisation and visual re-invention as a two-dimensional graphic sign, present in architectural projects as well as in artistic literature and treatises. This essay is structured into two sections. The first defines an apotheosis of traces, played out entirely within the centre of the material and immaterial deflagration of the ancient trace – namely, the Eternal City along with its enigmatic Tiburtine offshoots. The second section addresses this same apotheosis as it is articulated within theatrical artifice, understood as the primary “environment” for the scenographic experimentation of the Ideal City as the synthesis of sublime recapitulation.

Forma Urbis, Vestigium templi and the renowned sites of Antiquity

It may be of interest here to reflect upon several significant examples that have long accompanied our research into that dimension – initially literary and subsequently design-oriented – which we term the archaeology of architects. The first example concerns Rodolfo Lanciani's *Forma Urbis Romae* and the urban-scale recognition and visualisation of the horizontally stratified palimpsest; the second refers to the identification of an extremely complex vertical palimpsest and the design-led redrawing of the rampant traces connecting the Campus Martius with the Quirinal Plain (that is, the *querelle* between the Temple of the Sun and the Serapeum of Caracalla); the third pertains to the poetic recognition of the renowned – and mnemonic – sites of antiquity within the aesthetic and morphological perception of the ruins of Hadrian's Villa. The theme of recognising palimpsests is, therefore, pivotal.

Between 1893 and 1901, Rodolfo Lanciani – an engineer by training, a mathematician by application, but above all an archaeologist by profession – published his monumental work entitled *Forma Urbis Romae*. Comprising forty-six colour plates at a scale of 1:1000, the work aimed to illustrate Rome's subsoil upon the bedrock of the modern plan – specifically that of Nolli, updated and rendered transparent through the elimination of hachures – which served as the baseline reference for post-unification urban planning. Anticipating the layer-based structure of computer-aided design software by a century, Lanciani invented a new form of representation for the archaeological palimpsest, composed of logical-chronological levels existing beneath the ci-



Figura 3. Gustave-Adolphe Gerhardt, *Temple of the Sun, Rome*. Front Elevation towards Piazza della Pilotta (Envoi de Rome de 4ème année: Architecture. 1868. Env 59-04).

ty's contemporary field of use during a historical moment of rapid and profound transformation. The graphic output is of extraordinary beauty. Certain plates achieve an exceptional artistic and narrative standard, systematising the classification of historical phases – visualised through a specific chromatic code – with a wealth of invaluable topographical and toponymic data. Among these memorable plates, one can certainly include Plate 13, depicting the palimpsest of the Vatican Gardens (*Horti Vaticani*) with the Circus of Nero, the imperial mausoleums, and the two superimposed basilicas; or the sequence of Plates 28, 29, and 30, showing the Tiber Island (*Insula Tiberina*), the Theatre of Marcellus, the Roman Forum, and the palimpsest of the Domus Aurea; as well as Plate 22, with the sequence of the Imperial Fora.

Beyond the primary objective of the work – namely, to provide the municipal administration of the Urbe with a qualitative instrument to oversee the projected expansion of Rome as the capital city by highlighting the archaeological relevance of the subsoil – this visualisation of the hidden and mysterious heritage lying beneath Nolli's city sparked a veritable “archaeological fever”. This, in turn, generated an unprecedented awareness first of excavation, and subsequently of preservation; but above all, it fostered an awareness of excavation as a conscious expansion of the system of traces. Indeed, the *Forma Urbis* constitutes an extraordinary device for the synoptic visualisation of traces relating to epochal structural sequences of transformation and the diverse designs of urban refoundation recorded by the city over centuries. Most importantly, it represents the first great system for visualising an archaeological palimpsest according to the principle of horizontal stratigraphy. To this day, no other city in the world possesses such a device.

Plate 16 of the *Forma Urbis*, which illustrates the ensemble of traces pertaining to the Quirinal sector, introduces us to the second theme: the recognition of the vertical palimpsest and that singular artistic-investigative activity constituted by the visualisation of monuments according to the formula of architectural reconstruction, based on the interpretation of vertical traces in the

absence of recognisable typological elements. This is precisely the case of the gigantic sanctuary built against the slopes of the Quirinal Hill, which bridged the elevation of the Campus Martius with that of the Baths of Constantine – a difference in height of some 30 metres – of which several mighty substructures remain from the block facing today's Piazza della Pilotta. The original identity of the building has been the subject of a centuries-old debate – now finally, it would seem, settled – which pitted, on one side, a Severan affiliation (early 3rd Century) identifying the sanctuary as the Serapeum of Caracalla (209-217 AD) against, on the other side, a later affiliation (second half of the 4th Century) linked to the figure of the Emperor Caesar *Lucius Domitius Aurelianus* (270-275 AD), who reportedly dedicated the sanctuary to the Sol Invictus. The verified co-presence of cults of Eastern origin did little to unravel this knot. Canina, as well as Gerhardt himself, leaned toward the second affiliation, to which the latter refers in his design memoir. Renaissance architects, Sangallo and Serlio in particular, read the traces differently and attributed them to a palace, with the exception of Palladio, who associated them with a temple consecrated to Jupiter. Subsequently, archaeologists and scholars became convinced – based on the observations of Nibby, supported in turn by Hülsen – that the structures formed part of a complex identified as the Serapeum of Caracalla (Rossetto, Sartorio, Uginet, 1992).

Yet, setting aside the querelle now resolved in favour of the Severan affiliation, what we wish to highlight here concerns the interpretative exercise on the traces of the vertical palimpsest carried out by a brilliant pensionnaire of Villa Medici, Gustave Adolphe Gerhardt (1843-1921). The author of a reconstructive project of extraordinary beauty, capable of wedding a sublime visionary elegance with an equal capacity for archaeological investigation and sign-interpretation, the young Gerhardt had nevertheless sided with the solar affiliation. He did so, however, without imprinting its presumed characteristics onto his process of rendering the sanctuary's form. On the contrary, the sanctuary is subjected to a complex reading of built vertical traces combined with others brought to light by archaeological excavations initiated and funded by the Pensionnaire himself. The building thus rendered – and substantially accepted by contemporary archaeologists – presents two architectural fronts: the first, articulated across two consecutive blocks, faced Piazza della Pilotta; the second, of great beauty, was arranged upon the Quirinal Plain with a splendid symmetrical precinct that framed, on axis, the majestic temple proper. This consisted of a dodecastyle front whose dimensions surpassed those of the Temple of Venus and Roma, until then considered the largest in the Urbe and among the grandest in the Empire. The elegance of the forms and the scientific quality of the reconstruction are sustained by an investigation that remains sensitive to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary and iconographic legacies, as well as by an effective reading of the vestiges present at both the level of the Campus Martius and that of the Quirinal – climbing through the terraces of the Villa Colonna Gardens and the Pontifical Gregorian University.

«*Tiburtinam Villam mire exaedificavit, ita ut in ea et provinciarum et locorum celeberrima nomina inscriberet, velut Lyceum, Academiam, Prytaneum, Canopum, Poicilen, Tempe vocaret. Et, ut nihil praetermitteret, etiam Inferos finxit*». He built his Villa at Tivoli marvelously, in such a way that he actually inscribed upon its parts the names of provinces and places of the highest renown, calling them, for example, *Lyceum, Academia, Prytaneum, Canopus, Poecile, and Tempe*. And so as to leave nothing out, he even fashioned the Underworld.

A daring gamble, outlined through a technique of recognition based on the visual association of ruined forms with a mythical topography *abs-tracta* from the textual narratives of ancient authors. Aelius indeed notes how Hadrian had a magnificent Villa built in the vicinity of Tivoli, consisting of pavilions whose forms imitated those of the renowned sites of antiquity, thereby constructing a sort of park of memories¹. Ligorio thus moves through the ruins along an itinerary



Figura 4. Gustave-Adolphe Gerhardt, *Temple of the Sun, Rome*. Front Elevation towards the Quirinal (Envoi de Rome de 4ème année: Architecture. 1868. Env 59-04).

already traced on the ground by contemporary travellers and scholars (Flavio Biondo, Francesco di Giorgio, Raphael, Palladio, Baldassarre Peruzzi, Vignola, etc.), seeking forms that could be intuitively associated with the places evoked by Aelius, specifically: *Poecilis, Canopi, Academia, Inferorum Elysiorum, Lycei, Prytanei, Tempe*.

At the end of this imaginative hermeneutic operation upon the ruin, Ligorio is certain he has found what Aelius cited; at that point, the new toponymy of Hadrian's Villa is written... and transcribed. Indeed, Ligorio records everything in a corpus of annotations (preserved at the State Archives of Turin) which Francesco Contini would subsequently transfer onto his plan of Hadrian's Villa, published in 1668. Yet, from Ligorio's notes arises, above all, the first literary description of the Villa, which de facto constitutes a fabulous itinerary through the renowned sites of antiquity. This itinerary is preceded by an introduction the likes of which had never been seen before: a sequence of five hundred locutions akin to "keywords", almost entirely devoid of verbal predicates, which compose a framework of reference made of *naked names* cast into the literary origins of Antiquities, suspended between mythology and built territorial co-presences. It functions as an esoteric dictionary of terms possessing an archaeological value and meaning, to be associated with his grand tour through the traces of antiquity. In short, to explain the ruins and to grant them continuity within the contemporary architecture of his day, Ligorio developed a dictionary and an itinerary at once – acting simultaneously as a textual-lexical structure and as an archaeological narrative action.

Palladio's Angel. Vicenza between Epigraphic Humanism and Urban Scenography

The decade spanning the 1540s represents a fundamental milestone in Andrea Palladio's training, owing to the experiences shared with his mentor, Gian Giorgio Trissino. Having intuited his talent, the erudite man of letters instructed the stonemason working on his villa – then known as the «garzon de maestro Zuane et maestro Jeronimo compagni tagliapietra in Pedemuro» (Puppi, 1978) – in order to fashion him into an architect. This title was appended to the name of Andrea di Pietro della Gondola for the first time on the occasion of the triumphal entry of Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi on 16 September 1543². The Cardinal's installation provided Trissino with the opportunity to orchestrate a preliminary trial of *Renovatio Urbis* for Vicenza. The latter was among the wealthiest, most populous cities of the Venetian terraferma, bolstered by silk production exported throughout Europe by the mercantile aristocracy. Politically, however, the city was

subjugated to the Serenissima, and the Diocese suffered from a severe lack of temporal power. The necessary outlet for civic pride found fertile ground in the cultural project conceived by Trissino – an *ex-nihilo* construction of ancient roots. To thrive in commerce, it was imperative for Vicenza to transform itself from a rural borough of Gothic-communal matrix into a monumental city, even in the absence of the *Monumentum* understood in the Albertian sense. To implement this epigraphic programme, wherein antiquarian culture carried a meaning of autonomy from Venice's dominant classes, the Berician city had to display a civic face projected towards a new spatial and functional order. This required a philological exercise and, consequently, a direct knowledge of the vestiges of antiquity: «to be on par with the classics... [without]... letting oneself be “enchanted” by them» (Cacciari, 2019).

For this reason, between 1541 and 1549, Trissino accompanied the young Palladio to face Roman antiquities³, personally introducing him to Vitruvius and urging him to test the treatise's correctness in the field through surveys and redraftings. It is easy to envision Trissino reciting passages of Vitruvius from memory to verify whether classical canons corresponded to real measurements, while Palladio excavated and measured with a measuring tape and plumb line: «*Peripteros autem erit, quae habebit in fronte et postico senas columnas, in lateribus cum iis quae sunt in angulis undenas*» (Vitruvius, III, 2, 5), that is: «The peripteral temple will instead be that which has six columns on the facade and six on the rear, and eleven on the sides, including those at the corners».

The interest of the two men was not merely academic. Both sought an authority that would justify choices to be transformed into buildings for the future. Text and archaeological trace fused in an attempt at reconstruction that was itself a new design: Vitruvius provided the theory, and the monument's fragment provided the measurable proof, as if it were a voice turned to stone. While other architects surveyed temples for professional or artistic ends, the two Vicentines possessed an ideological, if not outright pedagogical, intent. They were constructing the visual translation of Trissino's field lessons, through which Palladio attempted to restore the supreme splendour of an entire civilisation, subsequently rendering them as fair copies in his work *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (*The Four Books of Architecture*). He felt a duty to excavate, measure, and straighten the past to render it an applicable rule across centuries. Prompted by his mentor's theoretical approach, he produced surveys dense with dimensions, whereas Serlio had simplified and Sangallo or Peruzzi had chosen a pictorial stance. His prior construction-site experience impelled him to verify and select the classical canon, developing an original, replicable model – no longer sustained solely by antiquarian culture, but oriented toward design in the city of the future, thereby coming closer «to the will of those who spend rather than to that which ought to be observed» (Palladio, II, 1). Palladio, born an artisan, knew that traces had to be readapted to the present time, evoking theory only to avoid an overall effect of excessive artifice. His modern spirit considered the work of Vitruvius not as an all-encompassing manual to be followed blindly, but as literature corroborated by the experience of surveying – a point of departure for a reworking that was architectural design.

Thus, as the metaphor in *L'Italia liberata dai Goti* narrates, a reciprocal exchange of knowledge was taking place between mentor and disciple, analogous to that between the military leader Belisarius and the celestial deity, the Angelo Palladio. This figure conceals the intention of a *Renovatio Urbis* even within the literary pages of Trissino's epic-chivalric poem, which carries an undoubtedly autobiographical undertone: what was the liberation from the barbarians if not another way of indicating the aesthetic-cultural redemption of Vicenza from its Gothic “garb”, achieved through the guidance of a *Princeps inter pares* – a role claimed by Trissino well before the founding of the Olympic Academy? On the other hand, borrowing the well-known title



Figura 5. Andrea Michieli, called il Vicentino, *The Arrival of Henry III in Venice*, Venice, Palazzo Ducale, Sala delle Quattro Porte (© Archivio Fotografico - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia).

of Massimo Cacciari's essay linking Karl Kraus to Adolf Loos, the Vicentine mentor was likewise Palladio's Angel, embodying his guide, his critical conscience, and his ethical-aesthetic rigour throughout a training that occupied the entirety of the 1540s, concluding with the commissioning of the Palladian Basilica and the death of Trissino.

Thirty years later, the execution of the Olympic Theatre stands as both paradigmatic and conclusive regarding the experience gained in reworking the ancient ruin. Alongside the method that intersected the study of the Vitruvian source with the surveying of ancient theatre ruins, the architect introduced heteronomous knowledge. The experience acquired in scenographic designs for theatrical performances staged inside the Basilica for the Olympics – such as *Sofonisba* and *L'Amor Costante* – and in urban events across Vicenza and Venice (of which there remains the depiction of the imposing *The Arrival of Henry III of Valois into Venice*, featuring the triumphal arch and the *Columnatio* on the Lido beach) integrated practice with the analysis of theories produced by contemporary architects and the experiments on theatrical space that had spanned the century⁴. The result is not merely a space whose grammar, though composed of classical traces, is entirely new, but above all an architecture that goes far beyond the *Teatro all'Antica* that the Academicians expected and with which critics have repeatedly labelled this outfitted interior. To comprehend the scope of this innovation, it is necessary to return to 1556, to the vernacular translation of Vitruvius edited and commented upon by Daniele Barbaro, enriched by Palladio's drawings. In Book V, a double-page drawing depicts half of a *Scaena Frons* with a double Corinthian order. The *Porta Regia*, positioned on the left to indicate that what we see is partial, and the *Hospitalia* house a perspective backdrop capable of visually shattering the depth of the stage. Comparing this image with the plan provided with *Periactoi* – as indicated by Vitruvius – reveals a dimensional aporia between the *Postscenium* (too large to be used solely as a backstage area) and the «three triangular machines that turned upon pivots» (Barbaro, V, 6, 50-60), which seem to accommodate simple views in pictorial perspective and appear, moreover, cumbersome for the actors' entrances. Palladio did not yet have a clear understanding of how the Vitruvian lite-

rary trace could combine with an image of the built city that would accompany the deception of the eye, rather than being its mere metaphor.

It is equally evident that the perspective beyond the *Porta Regia* was under the spell of a scenographic sketch by Peruzzi for the play *La Calandria*, performed in Rome in 1514, which Palladio had certainly studied alongside Trissino during their frequentation of Roman workshops. In place of the monumental ruins of the Roman Capriccio, Palladio substitutes a city trans-visaged and re-constructed, wherein the sculptural presence of the Vatican Obelisk remains, and the dissected fragment with Corinthian columns – depicted at the centre of Peruzzi's backdrop – becomes part of an urban front, realigning itself with the curtain of architectural perspective. The Vitruvian Tragic Scene with «columns, pediments, statues, and other regal elements» (Barbaro, V, 6, 9) is reworked into a new urban front: ancient, yet new. The *Scaena Frons* of the Olympic Theatre itself trans-visages the traces of antiquity, replacing the alternation of niches and columns repeatedly surveyed in ancient theatres with an elevation that elaborates and superimposes the triumphal arch and the *Columnatio* previously deployed in Urban Scenographies. The aporia highlighted in Barbaro is resolved through the three-dimensional, rather than merely pictorial, perspective of the streets of Thebes for Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*: narrative traces and architectural traces fuse practice and theory in a negotiation of dimensional relationships between the parts of the scenic space. This was prepared by Palladio ever since his apprenticeship with Trissino, and Scamozzi's executive conclusion in late 1584 arrived merely as the final completion on the construction site of an already structured posthumous idea.

Literary sources, iconographic memories, fragments of surveys, shreds of architectures seen and architectures hypothesised intermingle amid influences, references, lessons, and intuitions. The true face of Palladian architecture is an invented face, an *ex-novo* that feigns to be authentically ancient, being so without being so in an epigraphic manner. This truthfulness – almost cinematic, wherein the whole is believable despite being the sum of fragments that are not scientifically coherent – constitutes the symbolic strength of that architecture: separating copy from invention loses interest in the presence of the design fascination of ancient and modern interpenetrated with one another, having become inseparable in their meaning. Even more so, the scenographic copy of the scenic space constructed in the post-war period for European tours – forgotten in a warehouse and reassembled today inside the Palladian Basilica following restoration – demonstrates how architectural form can become the metaphor for a new *Renovatio*⁵ between archaeology and literature (of Vicenza and of Italy alike), even when using the vehicle of the theatrical ephemeral.

It must be noted, however, that in the streets of Thebes – both those of the permanent stage and those of the scenography reproduced to tour theatres across Europe – an “explicit” representation of the ruin is absent. Ennobled by Palladio's architectures, the city was by then capable of self-representation, recognising itself no longer through traces borrowed from the cultured iconography of other cities: the inside of the theatre copied a scenographically monumental outside. Analogously, the hemicycle space accommodated the Academicians in the flesh, while their stucco and plaster statues, dressed *all'Antica*, were arranged within the niches of the *Scaena Frons* – the unicum of a sumptuous apparatus that already anticipated Bernini's fully Baroque doubling⁶.



Figure 6, 7, 8, 9. Images from the exhibition *L'Olimpichetto. Ritorno di un ambasciatore*. *Scaena Frons* and perspective streets of the Teatro Olimpico, realised in 1948 as a Scenography. Ph. Silvia Cattiodoro.

Notes

* The paper is the result of a collaboration between the two authors. However, the first paragraph is attributable to Pier Federico Caliarì and the second to Silvia Cattiodoro.

¹ The Ligorio's interpretation of the Hadrian ruins is partially drawn from the essay by Pier Federico Caliarì, entitled *Stat Roma pristina nomine. Nomina nuda tenemus* (Faroldi and Vettori, 2025).

² To envision the temporary scenography materialised by Palladio in 1543, we must rely on images of his 1574 *The Arrival of Henry III of Valois into Venice*, documented in two prints at the MET (Zenoi, 1574; Monogrammist GMD, 1591) and in a 1593 painting by Andrea Michieli (Cattiodoro, 2012).

³ In autumn 1541, Palladio and Trissino studied the Pantheon and the Roman Forum. Between 1545 and July 1547, they stayed in Rome and its surroundings including Hadrian's Villa; Palladio's systematic surveys from this period are now in the Burlington Collection at the RIBA. He then contacted Pirro Ligorio in Tivoli (Cattiodoro, 2018), as well as Antonio da Sangallo the Younger's workshop. Vicentine noblemen and artists like Marcantonio Thiene and Giovanni Battista Maganza joined these travels. The final journey with Trissino occurred in 1549, before work began on the Palladian Basilica.

⁴ Several experiences in secondary courts were fundamental to the evolution of scenic space. Direct acquaintance with the court of Alvise Cornaro – the Paduan noble and patron of Ruzante – allowed Palladio to rework Falconetto's Porticoed Scene at the Loggia Cornaro (1524) and experience Urban Scenography used as a comic backdrop framed by the Roman-style triumphal arch at Cornaro's estate in the Euganean Hills.

⁵ The exhibition *L'Olimpichetto. Il ritorno di un ambasciatore* (Stefanutti, 2025-26) enabled the placement of this scenography within the Basilica Palladiana, evoking the performances outfitted by Palladio and depicted by Maganza in the Vestibule.

⁶ In *L'impresario (o dei due teatri)* (1637), Bernini staged two opposing theatres where the stage mirrored the reality of the auditorium.

References

- Barbaro D (1556), *I Dieci Libri dell'Architettura* of M. Vitruvio Pollione *tradutti et commentati* by Monsig. Daniel Barbaro, with drawings by A. Palladio. Francesco Marcolini, Venice. https://archive.org/details/gri_33125009320074 (accessed 5th Feb. 2026).
- Cacciari M (2019), *La mente inquieta. Saggio sull'Umanesimo*. Adelphi, Milan.
- Cattiodoro S (2012), *Il fondamento effimero dell'architettura*. Aracne, Rome.
- Cattiodoro S (2018), *Locus Ovatus in Formam Amphiteatri constructus*. *Ananke*, 84 (Speciale Villa Adriana), 121-128.
- Ciancio Rossetto P, Sartorio GP, Uginet CP (eds) (1986). *Roma Antiqua. Envois degli architetti francesi (1786-1901). Grandi edifici pubblici. Tempio di Serapide, Envois di Gustave A. Gerhardt. Carte Segrete*, Rome, 36-46.
- Faroldi E, Vettori P (2025), *Architettura Disciplina Eteronoma*. Quodlibet, Macerata, 89-106.
- Ioppolo G (1999), *La Forma Urbis* di Rodolfo Lanciani. In: Panella C (ed.), *Il Sistema Informativo Archeologico di Roma Antica*. Quasar, Rome (first ed. 1996), 3-36. https://www.info.roma.it/pianta_di_roma_1901_rodolfo_lanciani.asp (accessed 8th Feb. 2026).
- Lanciani R (1990), *Forma Urbis Romae*. Quasar Edizioni, Rome (rist. anast. MI 1893-1901).
- Palladio A, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*. Hoepli, Milan (1990, rist. anast. Venice 1570).
- Puppi L (1978), *Palladio in cantiere*. *Bollettino CISA XX* | 1978, 157-170.
- Puppi L (1974), *Le esperienze scenografiche palladiane prima dell'Olimpico*. *Bollettino CISA XVI* | 1974, 287-313.
- Vitruvio, *De architectura*, Migotto L (ed.) (1990). BUR Rizzoli, Milan.