

architecture exhibition *Europa-America*, a part of the 1976 Venice Biennale, expands the notion of an architecture exhibition beyond the display of objects and links the new format to an institutional shift that resulted in the creation of the Venice Biennale of Architecture four years later. Barry Bergdoll writes about a series of exhibitions showcasing the architecture of Latin America at the Museum of Modern Art in the 1950s. He argues that the art-historical interest in Latin American architecture and its inclusion in the museum's exhibition program was a consequence of the desire of museum board members to instrumentalize their international commercial and political interests. Wenche Volle looks at the various incarnations of Edvard Munch's *Frieze of Life* just after 1900 and shows how the installations of Munch's frieze were as important as the individual canvases included in it. Here, the openness of the art galleries and societies that invited Munch allowed him to transform a work of art into a work of architecture. Lothar Diem turns our attention away from art institutions to ethnography and heritage. His essay recasts attempts to preserve the Norwegian town of Røros over the better part of the twentieth century as a confrontation of two types of display: the open-air museum and the historic district. He discusses the unfolding of the confrontation over time as a product of the way each balances reenactment with displacement. Finally, my essay reaches back into the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to consider the audiences for architecture exhibitions in Germany. Audiences, or the ideal notions of them, were anything but uniform, and as they changed with the institution and the time period, the shape of the architecture exhibition changed as well.

DEBATES ON DISPLAY AT THE 1976 VENICE BIENNALE

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Almost two years have passed since I organized for the Venice Biennale the architecture exhibition Europa-America. Yet the questions posed by both the exhibition and the conference, beyond the dialectic strategy of the title, are in a certain sense even further from being answered today, in spite of the fact that since then this circus has had numerous occasions, albeit smaller in scope, to meet. In other words, the question of the identity of our generation, one that seems committed to creating a deep division between being and doing, remains unresolved. And it is building on that unresolved contradiction that this generation leaves behind an almost impractical space of suspension that makes way for new expectations and different hopes.

Vittorio Gregotti, 1978¹

In 1976, both the institution of the Venice Biennale and the international contingency of architects invited to present their work in the Laguna were still attempting to establish their identity with regards to the demise of the modern movement and its project. Although the exhibition of architecture at the Biennale would be formally institutionalized three years later, architecture had already been exhibited at the event, which throughout the 1970s acted as a springboard to display ideas as well as to provoke discussion and debate.² Specifically, the *modus operandi* of the exhibition *Europa-America. Centro storico-suburbio* (Europe-America: Historical Center-Suburb) and the conference associated with it, both of which have heretofore received little attention, was to circulate projects and ideas between American architects and their European counterparts.³ In this way, both exhibition and conference as recorded in the catalogue and through film, as well as reported in the press, provide a snapshot of a period in which the Biennale played a crucial role in understanding the hassles and squabbles constituting architecture while shaping architectural discourse as well as practice; they point to the importance of the Biennale as an event and institution.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

The 1976 exhibition *Europa-America* was one of three architectural exhibitions forming part of the 37th Venice Biennale. For the very first time, that year the Biennale was organized around a general theme: *Ambiente, partecipazione, strutture culturali* (Environment,

1 Vittorio Gregotti, Introduction to *Europa-America. Architettura urbana, alternative suburbane*, ed. Franco Raggi, exh. cat. Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 1978, p. 7. Unless otherwise cited, all translations are by the author.

2 In 1974 Gregotti was named head of the new "Arti visive e Architettura" section of the Venice Biennale. Until his resignation in 1977, he encouraged initiatives of the Biennale that promoted "architecture-event" and involve national and international architects (and artists) in exhibitions and debate, such as the exhibition *A proposito del Mulino Stucky* (1975). Silvia Micheli, "Biennale di Architettura di Venezia," in *Architettura del Novecento*, vol. 1: *Teorie, scuole, eventi*, ed. Marco Biraghi and Alberto Ferlenga, Turin, 2012, pp. 99–106.

3 The exhibition juxtaposed a group of fourteen European architects under the auspices of Gregotti and Raggi with a group of nine American architects gathered around Peter Eisenman and Robert A.M. Stern.

1 Outside the exhibition *Europa-America*. *Centro storico-suburbio*, 37th Venice Biennale, 1976, Magazzini del Sale, Zattere.



4 The exhibition *Ambiente-Arte* curated by Germano Celant (in the large Italian pavilion of the Giardini) explored the idea of environments within the visual arts from 1912 to 1976 by reenacting several famous art environments, and juxtaposing these against works produced by contemporary artists in situ. *Annuario 1977-1978/Eventi del 1976-1977*, ed. Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee, Venice, 1978, p. 263.

5 *Annuario 1977-1978/Eventi del 1976-1977*, p. 267.

6 Including Vittorio Gregotti, Carlo Aymonino, Peter Eisenman, James Stirling, Raymond Abraham, Aldo Rossi, John Hejduk, Denise Scott-Brown, Hans Hollein, Robert A.M. Stern, Alison and Peter Smithson, Emilio Ambasz, Giancarlo De Carlo, Aldo Van Eyck, Alvaro Siza, and Oswald Mathias Ungers.

Participation, Cultural Structures). Focusing on the environment, that is to say a fusion with the world, a total body-ambience leading to a specific kind of communication, that Biennale was essentially framed by architecture. In other words, it was meant to problematize the relationship between architecture and the other arts (fig. 1).⁴

At the 37th Venice Biennale, architecture was, for the first time, presented in parallel to the visual arts. The Venice Biennale had been a showcase for the arts since the end of the nineteenth century, but it was only after 1968 that it began to include architecture, first among the visual arts and later as an autonomous discipline. In 1976, three exhibitions portrayed architecture's autonomy while linking the discipline to that idea of environment as a space that surrounds the human dwelling. More generally they tried to "underline the complexity of the problems of modern architecture: the appropriation of the capitalist model which holds architecture aloof from its fundamental decisions, [and architecture's] contempt for the relationship now existing between the individual and the community, between man and nature, to the advantage of the demands of [formal] speculation."⁵ The first two exhibitions, *Werkbund 1907. Alle origine del design* and *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il fascismo*, provided a critical perspective on the historical and ideological origins of the modern movement (fig. 2). The third exhibit was *Europa-America. Centro storico-suburbio. 25 architetti contemporanei*. Very different from the previous two, this exhibition looked at contemporary architecture. It focused on the dialectical relationship between Europe and America, urban centers and periphery, and theory and practice, providing the ground for experimentation through architectural speculation, theoretical



2 Exhibition *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il fascismo*, 37th Venice Biennale, 1976, Chiesa di San Lorenzo.

pronouncement, and representational strategies. But it was also the occasion for the production of architectural discourse: on August 1, 1976, the day *Europa-America* opened, the Venice Biennale held a lengthy disciplinary debate at the Palazzo del Cinema on the Lido di Venezia. There, a stormy discussion took place between approximately twenty of Europe and America's most eminent architects.⁶

Europa-America was organized by the Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti with the assistance of the young architect Franco Raggi, and in collaboration with his American counterpart Peter Eisenman. Its ambitious objective was to stage a confrontation between European and American visions of the city: historical city centers in the case of Europeans, urban expansion into the suburbs in the case of Americans.⁷ While Europeans were chosen by Gregotti and constituted a rather scattered and loosely assembled arrangement of architects, Americans traveled under the guardianship of the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) and were positioned as a group conveying ideas from the New to the Old World.⁸ The exhibition presented contrasting attitudes: Europeans displayed a series of real project descriptions, a compendium of their current practice, or, in some cases, broader poetic expressions on the more general theme of architectural design; while Americans used the exhibition as a laboratory and testing ground, producing and exhibiting imaginary projects as well as speculations and analysis on the theme of suburbia.

Europa-America was not a spectacular exhibition.⁹ Presented in the Magazzini del Sale, an old and disused salt warehouse situated on the Fondamenta delle Zattere, it was a display of real and utopian projects presented with conventional and often hard to decipher

7 The theme of the exhibition was elaborated by Raggi together with the American contingent. In early 1976, Raggi flew to America to meet with various people involved in the forthcoming Biennale, such as Eisenman and Frampton in New York. Franco Raggi, interview with the author, April 22, 2012, at Raggi's studio in Milan.

8 The IAUS was founded by Peter Eisenman in 1967. Envisioned as a think tank whose aim was to promote theory and criticism among American architects, it was originally positioned at a crossroads between university, museum, and the professional world.

9 Robert A.M. Stern confesses not remembering anything about the installation. Interview with the author, August 8, 2012, at Robert A.M. Stern Architects in New York.

10 Joseph Rykwert, interview with the author, October 5, 2011, at Rykwert's house in North London.

architectural modes of representation and mounted to make a point on the state of the discipline at an international level. Joseph Rykwert, a member of the advisory board of the Biennale and moderator of the Lido debate, recalls that *Europa-America* was nothing more than a public display of the faith in contemporary architecture, which had suddenly been catapulted into the position of mediator for the visual world.¹⁰ The five long and narrow *saloni* of the Magazzini del Sale, naturally lit from above, served as exhibition spaces, enhancing the particularly poetic character of this old warehouse by creating a strong contrast between the thick brick walls and the thin white exhibition panels showing the work of each of the exhibitors. Americans, concerned by the necessity of showing their competence and erudition, presented new ideas, *ex novo* and hitherto unseen projects extracted from particular and strictly American ideological positions. Raimund Abraham presented “The Seven Gates to Eden,” a poetic and formal exercise and a metaphorical declension of the archaic house (fig. 3). Eisenman displayed “Five Easy Pieces: Dialectical Fragments Toward the Decomposition and Reintegration of Suburb.” John Hejduk showed “Silent Witnesses,” a series of drawings that centralized the results of twenty years of research on the principles that govern form and space. César Pelli’s project, entitled “A Proposal to Build,” was the occasion for a humorous exploration, a sort of architectural holiday and an accommodating incursion into poetry using the idea of the house as a vehicle for experience and experimentation. A sense of instability, ambiguity, fragility, incompleteness, and, of course, irony emanated from most of the work on display. Europeans, on the other hand, presented real projects: concrete productions based on practical needs. Carlo Aymonino exhibited a representation of his project for the reconstruction of the Teatro Paganini in Parma (1964) and for the *liceo scientifico* (secondary school) in Pesaro (1971–74), amongst others; Giancarlo De Carlo showed photographs of the residential complex Villaggio Matteotti in Terni (1970–75); Hans Hollein displayed various projects, such as his “media-line” structure at the Olympic Village in Munich (1972) and the Schullin shop in Vienna (1972–74); and Lucien Kroll presented plans and photographs of his famous medical building at the Université Catholique de Louvain (1974), creating for the exhibition a sort of scenography: a scale model used by children as a playground (fig. 4). Sole exception amongst the Europeans, Aldo Rossi used the occasion of the exhibition to produce and exhibit one of his most cited pieces of work: The *Città analoga* collage, realized in collaboration with Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin, and Fabio Reinhart. An unconventional example of cross-fertilization

3 Raimund Abraham’s display (“Seven Gates to Eden”) at the exhibition *Europa-America*. Centro storico-suburbio, 37th Venice Biennale, 1976, Magazzini del Sale, Zattere.

4 Lucien Kroll’s display at the exhibition *Europa-America*. Centro storico-suburbio, 37th Venice Biennale, 1976, Magazzini del Sale, Zattere.



5 Aldo Rossi's display at the exhibition *Europa-America. Centro storico-suburbio*, 37th Venice Biennale, Magazzini del Sale, Zattere (on the image one can see a copy of the collage *La città analoga* realized by Rossi (with Fabio Reinhart, Bruno Reichlin, and Eraldo Consolascio) for the exhibition.



11 On the *Città analoga* and its link to the concept of analogy in architecture, see Jean-Pierre Chupin, "L'architecture de la ville," in *Analogie et théorie en architecture: De la vie, de la ville et de la conception meme*, Geneva, 2010, pp. 130–90.

12 Louis Martin, "The Search for a Theory in Architecture, Anglo-American Debates, 1957–1976," PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999; and Ernesto Ramon Rispoli, *Ponti sull'Atlantico. L'Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies e le relazioni Italia-America, 1967–1985*, Macerata, 2013. Italian scholar Marco Biraghi also gave a paper on the subject during a special event held in 2010 by the Venice Biennale of Architecture, unpublished.

between the imaginary and reality, this collage, referring to both architecture and the problem of the historical city center, bore a resemblance to Surrealist artworks (fig. 5). It remains to this day very enigmatic, but it is certainly one of the major keys to Rossi's theory of design.¹¹

OPEN DEBATE AS A FORM OF ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE?

The historical importance of *Europa-America*, as suggested by scholars, lies less in the exhibition and more in the debate that took place at the Palazzo del Cinema on the day of the exhibition's opening. Framed as a continuum to the work on display, the event rather turned into a forum for ideological confrontations and power struggles between generations and geography.¹² What had started, however, as a candid dialogue between practitioners from both sides of the Atlantic, turned into a generational opposition that exacerbated the many ideological tensions between architects in the twilight of the modern movement. A new "guard" was emerging, replacing the generation who had taken over the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (CIAM) twenty-three years earlier and who were now becoming the old guard (fig. 6).

The debate was staged under the title "Quale movimento moderno," which, intentionally left with no punctuation mark, remained ambiguous. Depending on the punctuation, this title could suggest different interpretations: interrogative "Which Modern Movement?" or "What Modern Movement?"; exclamative "What Modern Movement!" or suggestive "Which [one] Modern Movement?" But no matter what the initial question may have been, the debate did



6 "Quale Movimento Moderno" debate, Palazzo del Cinema, Lido di Venezia, August 1, 1976 (from back left to front right: Stanley Tigerman, John Hejduk, Carlo Ripa di Meana, Joseph Rykwert, Lucien Kroll, Alvaro Siza, Oriol Bohigas; Tigerman, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Emilio Ambasz, Carlo Aymonino, Peter Eisenman, Robert A.M. Stern; Jean Deroche, Henri Ciriani, Paul Chemetov, Aldo Van Eyck, Hans Hollein, Giancarlo De Carlo, and Herman Hertzberger). First audience row on the left: Vittorio Gregotti.

not result in the articulation of any clear position. Instead, it questioned the totality of the modern movement from many different directions. According to a later report, "two basically opposite conceptions of the architect's role emerged from the discussion. On the one hand . . . the architects who work with institutions as a mediator of the needs of the community; on the other hand . . . those who see architecture as a language for expressing a personal vision in which the architect experiments in a way which might be called poetic."¹³ In other words, the debate did not offer a clear answer to the question of identity, but rather, together with the work on display at the *Europa-America* exhibition, revealed an ideological divide between acting as an architect and being one.¹⁴

Previously unpublished photographs and video footage of the Lido debate immediately reveal the surprising setting: participants were oddly arranged and scattered across three rows of long tables facing the audience.¹⁵ Some coalitions seemed to have been formed—Eisenman sat next to Robert A.M. Stern and Craig Edward Hodgetts; Stanley Tigerman next to Hejduk; and Aldo Van Eyck near De Carlo and Hertzberger—yet there were no fixed locations for particular nationalities or ideologies. This perhaps reflects the plurality of positions spatialized through the debate. Another important aspect was the presence of a considerable audience, suggesting that the group was put on display to the profession or even perhaps to a wider public (fig. 7). If important debates among an international contingency of architects had taken place throughout the twentieth century, they were usually exclusive: "members only" private discussions. That year, the entire edition of the Biennale was characterized

13 *Annuario 1977–1978/Eventi del 1976–1977*, p. 270.

14 See Gregotti, Introduction to *Europa-America*, p. 7.

15 All iconographic material from the event is in black and white, but a press article from 1976 mentions that the tables were covered in green cloth. Vanna Barengi, "Biennale/Mostra e convegno sull'architettura Europa-America. Mio caro architetto voi essere Piranesi?," *La Repubblica*, August 5, 1976.

7 Public during the “Quale Movimento Moderno” debate, Palazzo del Cinema, Lido di Venezia, August 1, 1976 (at the back left: Manfredo Tafuri).



16 *Annuario 1977–1978/Eventi del 1976–1977*, p. 195.

17 Raggi, *Europa-America*, p. 7.

18 In a 1965 issue of *Architectural Design* with Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier on the cover, Peter Smithson went decade by decade through the modern movement to exorcise the shadow of the Modern Masters. Anthony Vidler, “Troubles in Theory Part 1: The State of the Art, 1945–2000,” *Architectural Review* 230, no. 1376 (October 2011).

19 Frank Lloyd Wright died in 1959, Le Corbusier in 1965, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius in 1969, Louis Kahn in 1974, and Alvar Aalto in 1976.

20 Rispoli, *Ponti sull’Atlantico*.

by the promotion of encounters and symposia aimed at establishing a dialogue with the public and confronting ideas regarding the theme of the environment.¹⁶ Architecture was not an exception. As a discipline it had to be exposed beyond the traditional locus of the Biennale. But what exactly happened during the course of the symposium and what themes and problems were discussed? Was the conversation fruitful? In what ways does a close analysis of the debate’s content provide us with a glimpse of the world-architecture reality in the mid-seventies?

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Gregotti offers keys to understanding the event. He says, “the objective of our generation is to defend the identity of architecture, its essence, even though it is sometimes hidden behind ideology, practice, history, graphic representation, and even abjuration.”¹⁷ The generation that had graduated from architecture schools in the decade following World War II lived in the shadow of the Modern Masters, somehow caught between crisis and continuity, in search of new principles for architecture.¹⁸ According to Gregotti, himself part of that postwar generation, it was because they were suddenly deprived of father figures that his generation pursued a desire for homogenization irrespective of national differences.¹⁹

Out of the exchanges taking place at the Lido debate emerged three main ideas characteristic of a nascent period later called post-modernism.²⁰ The first was the new preoccupation with the urban fabric defined by an anti-functional perspective: “The relation to context, be it historical or geographical, constitutes a typical characteristic of this generation of architects,” says Gregotti in opening the

debate.²¹ As early as 1959, with the publication of the essay *Studi per un’operante storia urbana di Venezia*, Saverio Muratori triggered interest in the scientific study of historical city centers and their fundamental structural character (typology and morphology). It was followed by the publication of Aldo Rossi’s *L’architettura della città* in 1966, and, in 1975, *Il significato della città* by Carlo Aymonino, just to name a few. Following that, Anglo-Americans such as Colin Rowe started to think of the city not only in terms of function but also in terms of memory and human artifact.

The second idea characteristic of postmodern discourses was the importance of politics and a critique of ideology, a new way of thinking in architecture that would imply a strong link between economic and political backgrounds. The event’s transcript is a testament to the importance of political engagement of this era, particularly in Italy. Most of the architects involved were leftists and their remarks—in particular those made by Gregotti, Aymonino, and Manfredo Tafuri—speak to their affiliation with the Communist Party and their interest in Marxist ideology. While Gregotti talked about a system that had become fragile due to the violence of the production mechanism, Aymonino compared the room to a politburo and referred more than once to Marxist dialectics: “I would say that most of the projects on display follow a certain trend [*tendenza*] toward the application and transformation of the grammar of the modern movement, changing it from time to time with considerable distortions, yet not in a dialectical form; I think the dialectical element has been abolished, or at least overcome, to give place to a proper transformation of the architect’s tools.”²²

The third important theme that evolved out of the debate was the question of architecture as language. From the sixties onward Italy stood out for its multidirectional research on the relation between language and architecture’s content. After the initial impulses of the International Style (as epitomized in the 1932 *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* at MoMA), architectural language became almost anonymous. Yet, as written by Gregotti in the introduction of *Europa-America*, the architects that were present at the debate tried to preserve the essence of modern architecture while developing their own diverse languages within this spectrum. But what language was the most valid? There was no consensus on this question. For some, like James Stirling, it was important to preserve a language that would be accessible to the “man on the street.” For others, like Denise Scott Brown, architects should not impose a style on clients but rather understand and be inspired by the vernacular language of American suburbs, far from the intervention of architects. Peter

21 Raggi, *Europa-America*, p. 174.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

23 Transcript of the debate in the original languages, IAUS archive, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Montreal.

24 Ibid.

Smithson and others regretted the excessive use of rhetoric that made architecture hard to understand:

In the last five years, since the study of linguistics [has] been shifted into the field of architecture, a very interesting phenomenon has happened that should have thrown light on the operation that European architects were trying to operate in this field. Instead of which it seems to have thrown an intense confusing fog over the situation; the situation is that architecture, the invention of words of architecture, extending its language, as to increase its range, reaching people's sensibilities, increasing its capacity to change the attitude of people who use it. Historically language has reached people easily because of the immense time that language has had to penetrate. To give a simple example: the portico is a symbol of entry, the image of a small portico, the gable over the window, the tabernacle on the altar, and so on, had many, many generations to acquire meaning. Modern architecture too has begun to acquire meaning.²³

They felt that time needed to pass so that a modern language could emerge out of the new techniques and, eventually, be accepted as an ensemble of symbols, in the same way as classical architecture was. All this was discussed in parallel to the emergence of a new interest in structuralist and semiological discourses emanating from France and Italy.

EXCHANGES AND CONFRONTATIONS

Besides the generational opposition, the debate echoed the binary form of the *Europa-America* exhibition, one that stemmed from the relationship of European architects to their American counterparts. The subtitle *Centro storico-suburbio* became incidental. As Peter Eisenman stated:

I think that we hope as Americans that for the first time we are bringing ideas from America. I think we are able to say that now because in this period of change at the Modern Movement, we feel that we had been less tarnished by the brush of functionalism and modernism.²⁴

For the Americans, led by Eisenman and Stern, the event was an opportunity to disseminate ideas originating from America, thus inverting the traditional direction of information exchange. Stern today comments, "The cross-cultural exchange of the Biennale was a great opportunity to kind of not feel like we were the dumb Americans receiving wisdom from the Old World, but to show the

Old World that we also had ideas, different but equally valid and interesting ideas."²⁵ Consequently, *Europa-America* solidified the New York-Venice axis, a network of intellectual exchanges that would develop throughout the seventies.

The Europe-America confrontation sprung from Gregotti's intuition that both continents had produced very different viewpoints on the relationship between art and environment: on the one hand, the Latin sense of the word "environment," referring to a more socio-political dimension and link to the relation between men and the world; and, on the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon sense of the term, relating to environment in its physical and structural component and to the idea of perception.²⁶ Even if many exchanges had occurred between both continents before the seventies, they were limited and often unidirectional (the United States adopted ideas from Europe).²⁷ CIAM remained essentially European, despite repeated efforts by Sigfried Giedion to form an American wing within the organization. While other events had brought to Europe a certain group of American architects, the *Europa-America* show, thanks to Eisenman, collected a wide range of solutions that would represent the panorama of contemporary architectural culture in America. He deliberately chose relatively young architects—amongst others, representatives of the Whites, the Grays, and the Silvers—who represented different American architectural trends.²⁸

Beyond the confrontation between American and European architects, the symposium also shed light on the distinctions among participants in terms of architectural ideologies. It problematized the relation between architecture and project, that is to say, between drawing as an expressive and autonomous research and the project as materialization of environmental and spatial proposals. In other words, a great divide appeared between architects more interested in poetic research in which architecture is a form of language and an expression of one's personal philosophy of life, and architects who, through the institution, were trying to implement the idea of the architect as mediator of collective needs.²⁹

The relation between theory and practice—or, as Hejduk would put it, between ideas and their material realization—was at the center of the debate (and incidentally the exhibition). At the Lido, a subject of contention was whether or not to move the discussion to the exhibition gallery, following the model put forth by CIAM.³⁰ A comment from Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger (probably referring to the work of American architects and some Europeans, for example Rossi), and reported by a journalist from *La Repubblica*, suggests the types of discrepancies that existed amongst exhibitors:

25 Robert A.M. Stern, interview with the author, August 8, 2012, at Robert A.M. Stern Architects, New York.

26 Vittorio Gregotti, interview with the author, April 23, 2013, at Gregotti's studio, Milan.

27 On Anglo-American exchanges, see Murray Fraser and Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the "Special Relationship": The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture*, London, 2007.

28 In a report from Peter Eisenman to Vittorio Gregotti, Eisenman wrote "These architects represent the most significant transversal section, in terms of ideology and geography, of both theoretical and professional work, realized today in the US." Peter Eisenman, "Proposta per la sezione Americana della mostra 'Europa/America,'" December 23, 1975, busta 245, Venice Biennale archive, ASAC, Fondo storico, Arti visive.

29 *Annuario 1977–1978/Eventi del 1976–1977*, p. 244.

30 During Team X meetings architects generally presented and explained one of their recent works, followed by an open discussion arising from the work on display, to avoid more general and abstract discussions.

31 Barengi, “Biennale/Mostra e convegno sull’architettura Europa-America.”

32 Raggi, *Europa-America*, p. 179. Translation by the author with the help of original transcript found in the IAUS archive, CCA, Montreal.

33 Or between ethics and aesthetics, to refer to the 2000 Biennale *Less Aesthetic, More Ethic* curated by Massimiliano Fuksas.

34 While phenomenologists are often understood to have been resistant to the “emergence of theory as something separate from practice,” Jorge Otero-Pailos has argued that phenomenology was associated with an early phase of postmodernism that would leave place for a more intellectual phase of the movement, one linked to structuralist and poststructuralist theories. The van Eyck/Tafari confrontation, while very violent in its form, can be insightfully read as a public demonstration of internal factions within postmodernism itself. Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture’s Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern*, Minneapolis, 2010, p. xii.

Those are architects? I think they should rather be on display at the Giardini with the painters, since their work has nothing to do with architecture. Architecture should serve people, that is, create an environment that allows people to express their individuality. But rather than this, some architects started to do nice drawings, thinking that they are Piranesi!³¹

But the most intense and significant moment of the debate was surely the confrontation between Aldo Van Eyck and Manfredo Tafuri. If the first part of the debate had proceeded smoothly, a brutal argument broke out after lunch when Van Eyck attacked Tafuri, who was sitting in the audience, by stating the following:

So if Tafuri is here, I’d like to tell him that I despise him, and I despise even more what he writes; it is deeply cynical, practically horrific, nauseating; it is very stupid, it is of bad taste, he has no idea how disgusting is the influence it has. I want to be very personal, and in this I will put all my energy: Tafuri is trying to persuade architects of something that does not exist. He deserves even worse than what I said. Gigantism of any sort disgusts me; great architecture has always had limited proportions, been scaled down; even Venice is smaller than most imagine it. Gigantism simply does not work in architecture, a teapot should pour tea. I am for absolute, unmitigated functionalism!³²

According to Eisenman, the Van Eyck-Tafari confrontation represented an ideological debate that still exists today between the phenomenologists and the so-called conceptualists.³³ It opposed the old Team X members, concerned with subjective and original human experience and consciousness, with a younger generation associated with the IAUS that was obsessed with the question of language and promoted a more theoretical approach to architecture.³⁴

This debate continued in the now famous annual discourse delivered by Van Eyck on February 12, 1981, at the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) in London, during which the Dutch architect nicknamed his enemies the R.P.P. (Rats, Posts, and Other Pets, obviously in reference to the postmodern). For Van Eyck, the R.P.P. were “trying to twist architecture into what it simply is not: not even in the sense that an apple is not a pear but still a fruit.” Known for being a “screamer,” Van Eyck compared the R.P.P.’s fantasies to pornography. And in the same RIBA discourse, Van Eyck clearly referred to the 1976 debate:

It is in the nature of people to deal with their environment—hence also to build the enclosures they need—adequately and often beautifully; the way they are also given to communicate adequately and often beautifully through language, that other gift. That is what I told the RPP at the Venice Biennale in 1976.³⁵

1976, A TURNING POINT?

The “Quale Movimento Moderno” debate can be used as a lens for examining the aftermath of the hegemony of the modern movement.³⁶ It took place at a watershed moment in the history of contemporary architecture—four years prior to *The Presence of the Past* (1980), the first independent Biennale of Architecture, which can be considered the pinnacle of postmodern architecture. But it can equally be remembered as an important marker in the prehistory of the Biennale of Architecture, alongside other institutions today dedicated to the display of architecture.

The year 1976 was a critical one for architectural theory. It was marked by an acceleration of international exchanges between architects as well as by the consolidation of the triangular network linking New York, London, and Venice.³⁷ As architectural historian Louis Martin writes:

The years 1972 to 1976 marked both the closure of the search for a universal theory of architecture in the late 1960s and the beginning of a new cycle of debates characterized by the acceleration of international exchanges, the advent of Italian criticism in North America and Britain, and the emergence of a new generation of theoreticians. These years of transition set the conditions for the self-conscious invention of the “post-modern” era in architecture in December 1975.³⁸

In America, 1976 began with the closure of the Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts*, an exhibition that had, as Felicity Scott argues, heralded the return of architectural drawings while having a “catalyzing effect on the architectural community.”³⁹ Indeed, with this show Arthur Drexler made a surprising gesture, looking back toward a style that seemed antithetical to the modern imperative of the museum. This exhibition was also the occasion for many debates and symposia organized in the US and attended by a few Englishmen, most notably Anthony Vidler and Peter Smithson. In Europe, Charles Jencks had recently used the term “post-modern” in relation to architecture for the first time and was about to publish his seminal book *The Language of Post-Modern*

35 Aldo van Eyck, “R.P.P. (Rats, Posts and Others Pests),” in *Aldo Van Eyck Writings*, vol. 2: *Collected Articles and Other Writings, 1947–1998*, ed. Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 540.

36 See Léa-Catherine Szacka, “Exhibiting the Postmodern: Three Narratives for a History of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale,” PhD diss., The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, 2011.

37 See Martin, “The Search for a Theory in Architecture,” p. 809.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 744.

39 Felicity D. Scott, “When Systems Fail” (1975), in *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism*, Cambridge, Mass., 2007, p. 59.

40 Charles Jencks used the word “post-modern” for the first time in 1975 in his article “The Rise of Post-Modern Architecture,” *Architectural Association Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (October–December 1975). Jencks uses the adjective “post-modern” to talk about an ensemble of ideas that would constitute an alternative to the contradiction inherent to modern architecture. As Jencks likes to recall, the word had been used way before, in 1945 by Joseph Hudnut in an article titled “The Post-Modern House,” *Architectural Record* 97 (May 1945), pp. 70–75.

41 The Spaniards (among which were Federico Correa, Rafael Moneo, and Oriol Bohigas) had met Eisenman earlier that year at Aspen’s Design Conference, an event chaired by Reyner Banham and also called “Europa/America.” See Reyner Banham, ed., *The Aspen Papers: Twenty Years of Design Theory from the International Design Conference in Aspen*, London, 1974. See also “Interview with Rafael Moneo,” *Architecturas Bis*, Editor, 1974–85, Interview by Joaquim Moreno,” in *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X to 197X*, ed. Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley, Barcelona, 2011, pp. 445–47.

42 Martin, “The Search for a Theory in Architecture,” p. 772.

Architecture. On both sides of the Atlantic the English-speaking world was in search of a theory of architecture that would move beyond functionalism.⁴⁰

Most important in the triangular network, linking New York, London, and Venice, is the New York-Venice axis specifically, the links that existed between two institutions: the IAUS and the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV), Venice’s architecture school. The axis developed through a series of conferences and exhibitions, the first dating back to 1968, when Gregotti and Eisenman met at the second “Pequeños Congresos” in Vitoria, Spain.⁴¹ The second origin is perhaps better known and was acknowledged in recent historiography: in 1972, Emilio Ambasz, a fellow of the IAUS and curator at MoMA, organized the exhibition *New Domestic Landscape*, the “first formal albeit indirect contact between IUAV and the IAUS.”⁴² According to Ambasz, this exhibition “was to leave a deep and pervasive imprint upon the perception of design” in America, since “Visitors were to realize that design in general, and Italian design in particular, meant more than simply creating objects to satisfy functional and emotional needs: the processes and products of design could themselves be used to offer critical commentary upon our society.”⁴³ The following year, in 1973, Aldo Rossi invited five architects—Eisenman, Hejduk, Richard Meier, Graves, and Charles Gwathmey—to take part in “Architettura razionale,” a section at the 15th Milan Triennale. This was a second, yet still informal, meeting between the IAUS group and several architects teaching at the IUAV. *Europa-America* was the logical sequel to that. Yet, if between the late sixties and the mid-seventies Europeans and Americans had multiple chances to discuss each other’s work all over the world, *Europa-America* was, according to Carlo Aymonino, the first open debate to take place in Italy.⁴⁴

AN OVERSEAS HIGHWAY FOR ARCHITECTURE

The cover of the *Europa-America* exhibition catalogue is enigmatic (fig. 8). Rather than presenting some architecture from the show, Raggi chose an image representing a causeway above the sea with 1930s-like cars traveling in both directions, a scene emblematic of the early modern movement. For Stern this was reminiscent of *Overseas Highway*, a painting by Ralston Crawford, a relatively unknown artist active in the thirties. Yet in reality, the image came from a postcard depicting the bridge between the Florida mainland and the Keys, and collected by Raggi himself.⁴⁵ On a basic level, the image suggests the reciprocity of the *Europa-America* exchange. The two poles are out of the picture, as the causeway seems to fall into the ocean,



8 Cover of the catalogue *Europa-America. Architettura urbana, alternative suburbane*, ed. Franco Raggi, Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 1978.

lacking any sort of fixed destination or prototypical building. I would propose that it suggests a critique of architecture; more specifically, a commentary on the recent demise of the modern movement, a movement that perhaps never arrived and never left; in other words, the absence of an end and a fixed identity that threatened a certain generation of architects, the one at the core of the 1976 Lido debate. In exchange for fixity, it suggests a staged flow of ideas, reciprocity in transcultural and transnational exchanges, a binary division of the world, different spatial positions during the debate, and a public engagement that now resides outside the city center. More than the quest of a disciplinary core and common identity or the position toward the modern movement, this image (and the Lido debate in general) speaks to the paramount importance of the relations between European and American architects for the later development of postmodern architecture.

The fact that the Lido debate was made into a real media event—both photographed and filmed and archived as part of the Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee (ASAC), the Biennale historical depository—is also significant. This reveals a great deal about the institutions’ aims and objectives at this time. On July 16, 1976, just a few days before the Lido debate, the ASAC reopened after being closed to the public for four years. The reopening of the archive testifies to the importance of publicity and ensuring the legacy of exhibitions and debates and their place in history. This attitude is also made evident by the production, from the mid-seventies, of a series of voluminous publications called *ASAC Annuari* yearbooks, and serving as a repository recording the entire activity of the

43 Emilio Ambasz, “Looking Back to See Ahead,” unpublished article; the citation may also be found in Emilio Ambasz, Tadao Ando, Fumihiko Maki, and Peter Buchanan, *Emilio Ambasz: Inventions; The Reality of the Ideal*, New York, 1992, pp. 72–73.

44 Transcription of the debate in Raggi, *Europa-America*, p. 7.

45 Franco Raggi, interview with the author, April 22, 2012, at Raggi’s studio, Milan.

46 The yearbooks were published in 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978. The 1976 publication, *Annuario 1976 – Eventi del 1975*, had 1,083 pages, was printed in an edition of 8,500, and distributed worldwide.

Biennale, including administrative meetings, press coverage, and other hitherto unpublished documents. Only four yearbooks were published, and the titanic endeavor was soon abandoned once the institution Biennale di Venezia had emerged from the “identity crisis” it had faced.⁴⁶

The *Europa-America* exhibition and debate was an act of faith in favor of contemporary architecture and a discursive turn within the discipline. What occurred in 1976 would be impossible today, in other words, putting, in a single room, twenty-something architects, some very influential and some soon to become influential, and have them discuss, around wine and cigarettes, practical, philosophical, and theoretical issues of the discipline. *Europa-America* was also an act of faith in the public engagement with architecture, predictors of the advent of the Venice Biennale of Architecture that would, from 1980, be dedicated to architecture in its own right.

But, more importantly, what *Europa-America* brought forward was an international perspective and a ratification of the definitive abandonment of the modern movement’s utopia. What was made evident by the debate was the fact that there no longer existed a tradition, such as the modern movement, that could be incorporated into a landscape increasingly distended and centrifugal, one in which free and unconventional modes of expression and the market were becoming always more pressing. In other words, the urban reality and the architects projecting it could no longer follow a universal and homogeneous theory. At the debate appeared a great divide between “being” and “looking.” On the one side, the concrete utopians favoring an architecture of participation still able to interpret the needs of the great number (Van Eyck, Hertzberger, the Smithsons). On the other, the early stage of a postmodernism, either pop (Robert Venturi and Hodgetts), or elitist and theoretical (Eisenman), as well as architects that believed in the visionary and redeeming artistic and poetical role of the architect (Abraham Hejduk, Alvaro Siza).

Unlike modernists, postmodern theorists did not believe in the existence of a global and unique theoretical approach that would explain all aspects of society. When rebelling against the CIAM principles and attacking modernists dogmas from within, the Team X generation still proposed a unique truth and a singular vision to be followed by architects. At the 1976 *Europa-America* exhibition and debate, however, what was put on display—via the institutional framework of the Biennale and the IAUS—was the advent of a discursive turn in architecture, toward a unified critique but a heterogeneous approach.

GOOD NEIGHBORS: MoMA AND LATIN AMERICA, 1933–1955

Barry Bergdoll

The intertwined histories of modern architecture and cultural politics in inter-American relations have yet to be fully written, but one thing is clear: in the crucial years spanning World War II and the heating up of the Cold War, New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) played a crucial role.¹ The museum’s intense involvement with Latin America began in 1933, the year Hitler came to power and the year the museum and its young Department of Architecture (founded a year earlier) began to focus more and more on the Americas. The focus on the Americas was a counterpoint to Alfred Barr, Philip Johnson, and Henry Russell Hitchcock’s attempts to map the European avant-gardes in the landmark 1932 *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*.² Here, Latin America had been surprisingly absent, despite the intense activity of architectural exhibitions in Brazil in precisely the decade covered by the 1932 show, beginning with São Paulo’s *Semana de Arte Moderna* in 1922.

While MoMA had been quick to focus on Latin American art, particularly in a series of exhibitions showing the work of Diego Rivera, in 1931 and 1933, Latin American architecture was still largely unknown north of the Rio Grande.³ But Rivera planted some powerful seeds that were to be played out for the next twenty years at MoMA, namely the relationship between modernism and nativism. Also in 1933 MoMA presented both a major exhibit in New York, *American Sources of Modern Art*, and staged *American Architecture* at the Milan Triennial Exhibition of Decorative Arts. So within a year of the so-called International Style show, famous for having suggested a European standard to which American architects should aspire, MoMA was in the business of exporting information on American architecture.

The year 1933 was also when Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched the “Good Neighbor policy” on his first day in the White House: “In the field of world policy, I dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of agreements in and with a world of neighbors.”⁴ The Declaration of American Principles adopted at Lima by the Pan-American Conference in 1938 called for “the development of intellectual interchange,” building on

1 An earlier version of this text appeared in Louise Noelle and Iván San Martín, eds., *Modernidad Urbana / Urban Modernity*, Mexico City, 2012, pp. 51–75.

2 See Nina Stritzler-Levine, “Exhibition Ideas: Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Architectural Exhibition Practice at the MoMA, 1932–1957,” in *Summer-son and Hitchcock Centenary Essays on Architectural Historiography*, New Haven, 2006, esp. pp. 37–50; and Barry Bergdoll, “Layers of Polemic: MoMA’s Founding International Exhibition between Influence and Reality,” in Barry Bergdoll and Delfim Sardo, *Modern Architects: Uma introdução / An Introduction*, Lisbon, 2011, pp. 23–30.

3 See Leah Dickerman and Anna Indych-López, *Diego Rivera: Murals for the Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 2011.

4 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “First Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1933, Washington, D.C.