



BOOK REVIEWS

Edilizia per il culto: chiese, moschee, sinagoghe, strutture cimiteriali edited by *Giuseppe Strappa*, UTET Scienze Tecniche, Turin, Italy, 2005, 492 pp. ISBN 9788802062877.

Designing religious buildings in recent decades has become for architects the ultimate expressive opportunity offered by the pop-star production of globalized contemporary architecture. It is as if the inherited worship tradition is no longer relevant to the definition of spatial properties and meanings. Devoid of inner and spiritual meanings, the religious space loses any sacral aura and therefore its very identity. Nevertheless, there is another theoretical approach that is in strict continuity with the past, without any mimicry or *historicism*, but based on a *morphological* approach. If spatial properties of sacred architecture are analyzed diachronically, each regional production can be explained as resulting from the long evolution of basic building types. As an example we can consider the derivation of Christian churches from the Roman *domus*. Even though some aspects of this approach have been widely accepted by the scientific community, the literature on the topic does not yet encapsulate the general validity of the concept. This volume instead considers the morphology of sacred spaces within different cultures, historical periods and religions, focusing mostly on common properties. Therefore it is not only a design manual about sacred architecture, but a professional source for contemporary design in continuity with the continuing formation process. Within the diachronical evolution of specialized building types, the formation process starts from urban tissues of basic building types, reaching the special type through the ‘knotting process’ (Strappa, 2013), a transformation providing ‘solidarity between the congruent spatial conception, the construction, and the roles that it is

expected to play’ (Strappa, 2012). The Italian history of architecture shows a substantial tradition in the design of sacred space, even though a theoretical statement on these organic matters has been missing. So it is possible to draw a continuous line from Gianlorenzo Bernini to modern and contemporary architecture.

Edited by Giuseppe Strappa, this volume systematically brings together several essays addressing issues related to the design of sacred architecture. It explores, within a rigorous scientific approach, different aspects of the design of spaces of worship. Different periods and religions are considered, each chapter describing the historical aspects of each building type and showing various contemporary examples: from synagogues (Alessandro Franchetti Pardo), to Christian architecture (Matteo Ieva), and a significant contribution on Islamic examples (Attilio Petruccioli). Sacred space is analyzed with particular focus on the liturgies of different cults, and described as the generator of an architecture adhering to the diachronic evolution of building types: ‘the *type*, in fact, from this point of view is not something transcendent but *immanent*’ (Ieva, 2012). The analysis of the morphology of urban spaces surrounding sacred architecture (Paolo Carlotti) offers an innovative point of view on the evolution of basic building types into special buildings. A section is dedicated to the architecture of cemeteries (Laura Bertolaccini) and their evolution to the present day, with some contemporary examples (for example, the enlargement of the cemetery in Terni in 2011, with Giuseppe Strappa as group leader, and Tiziana Casatelli, Paola Di Giuliomaria, Mario Pisani and Elmo Timpani). An important part is dedicated to the preservation of ancient sacred buildings (Giovanni Carbonara and Carlo Blasi), showing different techniques and interventions in traditional religious buildings.

A chapter is dedicated to several examples of modern and contemporary churches, with texts and drawings by Franco Purini, Mario Botta, Dom Hans Van der Laan, Giorgio Grassi and Francesco Cellini. All sections are accompanied by drawings and schemes explaining the morphology of each building type. All examples are shown in detail and include an extensive iconographic documentation. Particular attention is drawn to the contemporary design conceived as the last transformation phase of an inherited formation process, and to all aspects of architectural composition and urban design. The volume therefore provides a fundamental reference for contemporary architects engaged worldwide in the design of sacred space, and is also a useful resource for researchers and professionals interested in the history, morphology and preservation of traditional religious architecture.

References

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Alessandro Camiz, Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto, 'Sapienza', Università di Roma, Laboratorio di Lettura e Progetto dell'Architettura, Via Antonio Gramsci 53, 00197, Roma, Italy. E-mail: alessandro.camiz@uniroma1.it.

Saverio Muratori: a legacy in urban design by Marco Maretto, Franco Angeli, Milan, Italy, 2012, 144 pp. ISBN 978-88-204-0808-4.

Of the five interlaced branches of activity that characterized Saverio Muratori's working life — architect, urban planner, lecturer, scholar and philosopher — his role as urbanist has been perhaps the least investigated. In light of the current interest in urban morphology it is probably this role that has the most potential for further development. In fact, in this regard the above roles might be reduced to four, in the desirable event that the current separation of the roles of architect and

urbanist be rectified, since this divide has been one of the main causes of the crisis of urban form: a divide first perceived and investigated at an international level by Muratori and his school.

It is a well-known fact that disease comes first, doctors later. Which is why in Italy we were able to detect in advance the alarming symptoms of our 'high-profile patients': historic centres dramatically set apart from the sprawl of modern peripheries, reminiscent of the ingravescence of a tumor. Hence our international reputation, perhaps undeserved, and the bitter controversies that have accompanied, in Italy, the development of the 'Muratorian school', characterized by a drift of rather widespread and enduring platitudes.

The book by Marco Maretto can help to shatter the hard surface of prejudice once and for all, presenting to Italian and non-Italian readers Muratori's urban projects, which are quantitatively amongst the most significant of twentieth-century Italy. Muratori's experience spanned from his experiments in rationalist and empiricist realms, before and after the war, to his projects in the late 1950s for districts in Naples, Rome and Venice. In the process, his practice was subjected to radical rethinking and critical review, the direct result of his fundamental studies in Venice and Rome, which led him to found the Italian school of urban morphology. However, his design experimentation was abruptly interrupted in 1959. During his final years (1960-1973) he gave up planning and devoted himself largely to lecturing, as well as to the development of his 'architectural' thinking and to his studies on local territory.

More than any other of his assistants, Gianfranco Caniggia pursued the lesson of 'working history', in the Quinto district of Genova and the Giudecca project in Venice. In a frequently cited article, written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Muratori's death, Caniggia concisely expressed his critical judgment of the evolutionary process of the maestro's urban projects: focusing in particular on the INA-Casa districts, in which he acknowledged the negative presence of six theoretical *idola* drawn from external models of the Modern Movement. No trace of the latter can be found in Muratori's final 'high profile' projects, attesting to how he gradually arrived at design based on fabric, considered by Caniggia the royal road to urban projects.

This is the very meaning of Muratori's legacy, to which the English title of the book refers. Maretto on the one hand develops and examines in depth, from the point of view of urban form and stylistic features of architecture, Caniggia's hypothesis,