

Aldo Rossi: “My Architecture Stands Mute and Cold”

ALEXANDRA DIAS FORTES*
IFILNOVA, Lisbon, Portugal

Aldo Rossi offers a captivating account of the relationship between human life and material forms. Rossi says that he came to “the great questions”, and to his discovery of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Georg Trakl through Adolf Loos (Rossi 1982: 46). I will outline some connections between Loos, Trakl and Wittgenstein that might help us to grasp the way in which Rossi’s assertive attitude concerning architecture gradually leans towards “forgetting architecture”. (The goal is not to try and justify how they might have influenced Rossi; rather the aim is to try to understand Rossi’s work with those connections as a backdrop; to outline a constellation of affinities.) The running thread being the internal relation between the object and the subject, i.e., “construction and the artist’s own life” (Lombardo 2003: 97). I will conclude by considering architectural form on the page, that is to say, in Rossi’s plans, “a graphic variation of the handwritten manuscript”, and drawings, “where a line is no longer a line, but writing” (Rossi 1981: 6), and finally by considering what he says about his architecture, namely, that it stands “mute and cold,” tough it will still “creak” (Rossi 1981: 44), and give rise to “new meanings”.

Keywords: Aldo Rossi; architecture; analogy; artefacts; urban forms of life; aesthetics of urban everyday life.

1.

Aldo Rossi seems to inhabit a tension between his more affirmative, assertive view of the city as architecture and his later inclination to-

* Written with the support of the FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia [Foundation for Science and Technology]), under the PTDC/FER-FIL/32042/2017.

wards forgetting architecture,¹ marked by melancholy² (a feeling that he expresses in various ways). His explanation of fog's entering a building, for example, springs to mind as a powerful image of how an atmosphere enters a construction, saturating it with the feeling and character of the passage of time:³ His drawings are also a reminder of how time acts upon things and of how things acquire undeniable distinctiveness through their permanence in time, even though they become worn—"like stones worn smooth by the feet and hands of generations of men"—surviving, in the end, as images or as similes and not so much as material presences.

This distinctiveness, or individuality, is conveyed by means of a new architectural viewpoint, a view in which size and perspective are remade and everyday objects occupy a space as huge as their presence in our lives—coffeepots, glasses, spoons, and bottles are as tall as buildings, as majestic as cathedrals. (See for instance the drawing *Dieses ist langer her—Ora questo è perduto*: 1975.) Their role, usually ignored because of their excessive familiarity, is no longer left unnoticed but is rather acknowledged; commonplace items assume their rightful place in the depiction of sensible forms with which human beings routinely interact, thanks to Rossi's capacity to find analogies between things and to place them together. We do not usually recognize their affinity. His collections—or recollections—help us to appreciate their similarities, however, especially insofar as they make us forget their function, directing our attention to their reality and subsistence in our life and

¹ As Patrizia Lombardo concisely puts it: "Rossi's poetic, almost intimate vision—architecture is like a love story, architecture should be forgotten—seems to be very much at odds with the positive tone of *L'architettura della città* (...). Aldo Rossi often remembers with tender irony his sound convictions at the time he wrote that book" (Lombardo 2003: 97).

² Melancholy is notoriously and internally associated to Rossi's work in Lopes' writings on the architect and his oeuvre (cf. Lopes 2016), and rightfully so, given the association of melancholy states with the speculative and the contemplative, words that could be used to describe the coloratura of Rossi's writings. In antiquity, owing to Hippocrates and his followers, health was conceived of as the result of the equilibrium of four humors: blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile. In excess, black bile (located in the spleen, cold and dry like the earth and influenced by Saturn) caused fear and despondency, which, if persistent, were symptomatic of melancholia. [Melas (black) + khole (bile).] This contributed to the view that someone affected by melancholy was dark and gloomy: saturnine. According to Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl (1964: 18–29), Aristotle was the first to recognize this mood in notable figures. Instead of afflicting these men, black bile worked together with their intellectual activity, causing their mental faculties to increase instead of declining. From then on, melancholy was associated with a capacity for speculative thought (cf. Saxl 1964: 168 ff.)

³ "Just standing in *Sant' Andrea* at Mantua I had this first impression of the relation between *tempo*, in its double atmospheric and chronological sense, and architecture; I saw the fog enter the basilica, as I often love to watch it penetrate the *Galleria* in Milan: it is the unforeseen element that modifies and alters, like light and shadow, like stones worn smooth by the feet and hands of generations of men" (Rossi 1981: 1.)

in our memory *qua* pictures and depictions. Their features suddenly appear bare and as grand as the primal forms utilized by humans from time immemorial (or at least since we began making artefacts).

Rossi first suggests the idea that artefacts, and more importantly cities as urban artefacts, are vital to understanding how architecture evolves from appropriating a site to planning, construction, dwelling, and finally relinquishment (and indeed to understanding Rossi's own relation to architecture, what it meant to him and why) in his 1966 book, *The Architecture of the City*. I shall start by indicating a few of the attitudes and principles he expounds there—some of the concepts he delineates—which together act as a background for decoding his work, including its continuities and discontinuities over the years. I will briefly turn my attention to Adolf Loos to clarify how constitutive aspects of Rossi's practice and beliefs relate to his views on the Austrian architect. Following this, when considering his later understanding of architecture (for instance in his *Scientific Autobiography* of 1981), and bearing in mind that it was through Loos that he discovered both Georg Trakl and Ludwig Wittgenstein, I will concisely deal with the following questions: Which aspects of Georg Trakl's poetry did he find so appealing, and why? And how can Wittgenstein's philosophy, early and late, help us to grasp the development of Rossi's thought?⁴

2.

The main theme of *The Architecture of the City*, as the title aptly prefigures, is the standing and prominence of architecture to approach and to outline the city,⁵ in one word, to understand it. Ultimately coinciding with architecture, the city is its finest, most refined presentation. Thus, the title also signals the process of its becoming, its extended making.⁶ Architecture (and consequently, for Rossi, the architect) is what best provides a means of understanding the city (since architecture and the city eventually are one and the same), and of grasping it as a totality—as a changing, growing, expressive form of the collective memory of its dwellers and authors, of elements and places sought by the latter as a means of appropriating its various sites, especially by means of urban

⁴ Loos and Wittgenstein met through Ludwig von Ficker, founder and editor of *Der Brenner* (cf. Monk 1991: 183.) Loos and Trakl also knew each other; proof of this is Trakl's dedication of *Sebastian im Traum* to Loos. Wittgenstein and Trakl were also acquainted.

⁵ Cf. Lopes 2016: 135.

⁶ "The city, which is the subject of this book, is to be understood here as architecture. By architecture I mean not only the visible image of the city and the sum of its different architectures, but architecture as construction, the construction of the city over time. I believe that this point of view, objectively speaking, constitutes the most comprehensive way of analyzing the city; it addresses the ultimate and definitive fact in the life of the collective, the creation of the environment in which it lives" (Rossi 1982: 21).

artefacts.⁷ Architecture thus constitutes the first, crucial feature of the city that Rossi analyses, a feature that he explores by means of an example: The *Palazzo della Ragione* in Padua.⁸ The wealth of functions that this building has served throughout its existence surprises Rossi. They show that form does not determine use, although form is precisely what affects and excites, what moves us, consequently configuring the city. This is why Rossi views it as a classic example of a phenomenon that he continually encounters and which ultimately leads him both to devalue the idea of function as being decisive to a building's history and to declare that functionalism is an incorrect method within architecture, unfit for dictating the design of urban artefacts. The latter do not follow function, although it could be said that function follows from urban artefacts insofar as these use form as needed in order to experience and *live* a space, shaping the city in the process. For this reason, an urban artefact possesses a specific identity, a uniqueness acquired throughout the process by means of which something that could otherwise be devoid of character becomes a specific place, imbued with spirit—the *genius loci*—in other words, according to Rossi, a *locus*.⁹

Although he first criticizes Adolf Loos, Rossi later praises him and his use of a Doric column in the project for the Chicago Tribune.¹⁰ In particular, he celebrates it as an application of style that expresses a great understanding of the American city, which for Rossi is an example of the "architecture of the city" *par excellence*.¹¹

⁷ "[W]hich like the city itself are characterized by their own history and thus by their own form (...)" (Rossi 1982: 29.) In Rossi's text the English word 'artifact' is used to translate the Italian 'fatti', and 'urban artifact' stands for 'fatto urbano'. (This text uses instead 'artefact' and 'urban artefacts'.) It should be noted that 'fatti', in Italian, refers not only to something made by human hands, but also to actions and facts, to deeds, to something that was accomplished; artefacts are related to the history of the city, they partake in its life. Hence, they are not merely physical objects.

⁸ "In almost all European cities there are large palaces, building complexes, or agglomerations that constitute whole pieces of the city and whose function now is no longer the original one. When one visits a monument of this type, for example the *Palazzo della Ragione* in Padua, one is always surprised by a series of questions intimately associated with it. In particular, one is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these functions are entirely independent of the form. At the same time, it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live it and experience it, and in turn it structures the city" (Rossi 1982: 29.)

⁹ Cf. Rossi 1982: 103 and 130.

¹⁰ "Rossi's analysis evolves and changes radically through the various texts he wrote on Loos. In the first text for *Casabella*, Rossi seems to interpret the project for the Chicago Tribune as a reactionary contestation (...) Rossi reverses his position (...)" (Onaner 2012: 50.)

¹¹ "American architecture is above all 'the architecture of the city': primary elements, monuments, parts" (Rossi 1982: 15).

The importance of Loos's Doric column also lies in the fact that it perfectly illustrates the creation of an analogue.¹² Rossi was struck by it, especially by the ability of an ancient element to produce something significant and momentous in a new world, in a new time, an artefact—architecture—that was closely or internally connected with antiquity. Thus it is not a stretch to say that it deeply inspired him; in the "diverse totality" that makes up a city, he saw analogues such as the column everywhere he looked, leading him to develop the idea of the "analogous city."¹³

To better understand the impression that an artefact can make, an impression that affirms its identity as architecture and as an analogue—or in other words, a recurring form, built, depurated, through use and memory, into a precise construction that persists and returns—we would do well to bear in mind Loos's remark on what might drive us to say, "That is architecture."¹⁴ Likewise, we should remember Rossi's comment on this remark. He calls our attention to the fact that, owing to a building's extreme architectural formal purity, we are able on the one hand to identify it—to see the artefact in it—and on the other hand to repurpose it for understanding our own experience. We can measure the latter against something that has resisted time and has become a paradigm of sorts, a classic.¹⁵ Hence, we can say that artefacts possess

¹² The use of the Doric column in the project for the Chicago Tribune exemplifies the creation of an analogue because it does not simply copy a form and applies it there. It shows recognition of what in history is still alive and revives it in a new place and time. Creating an analogue—making an analogy—is different from copying because it entails establishing a relationship by way of an abstract move that filters memory and finds a proportion, a meaningful correspondence between things and their meaning. Rossi declares that he found in Carl Jung's definition of analogical thought as "a meditation on themes of the past", "a different sense of history conceived of not simply as fact, but rather as a series of things, of affective objects to be used by the memory or in a design" (Rossi 1976: 75).

¹³ For example, as a diverse totality: "Clearly, the Cathedrals of Milan and Reggio Emilia and the *Tempio Malatestiano* in Rimini were—are—beautiful in their incompleteness. They were and are a kind of abandoned architecture—abandoned by time, by chance, or by the destiny of the city. The city in its growth is defined by its artifacts, leaving open many possibilities and containing unexplored potential. This has nothing to do with the concept of open form or open work; rather it suggests the idea of interrupted work. The analogous city is in essence the city in its diverse totality; this fact is visible in the echoes of the East and the North that one finds in Venice, in the piecemeal structure of New York, and in the memories and analogies that every city always offers" (Rossi 1982: 18.) For other aspects of the analogous city, cf. Rossi 1982: 13, 15, 18, 20, 22–23, 71, 92, 124, 136, 143, 161, 166, 174 and 176.

¹⁴ "If we find a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forest, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something in us says, 'someone lies buried here.' That is architecture" (Adolf Loos, quoted by Rossi 1982: 107).

¹⁵ "The mound six feet long and three feet wide is an extremely intense and pure architecture precisely because it is identifiable in the artifact. It is only in the history of architecture that a separation between the original element and its various forms occurred. From this separation, which the ancient world seemingly resolved forever, derives the universally acknowledged character of permanence of those first forms.

methodological value: we can use them to investigate and make sense of the present. By way of comparison, specifically of "different places" and "our own cities," we can begin to understand our "individual experience of each particular place," meaning that we can find an analogue in artefacts that helps us to come to grips with our own way of living. This process of finding a useful correspondence between different things is made possible by a practice that Rossi describes as consisting in the repeated use of the architecture of antiquity, an era that Rossi considers to be exceptional in its remarkable dedication to construction and the elucidation of form. Furthermore, the practice of finding an equivalence that can clarify the actuality of the singular experience of a specific place can also be a basis for constructing anew, that is to say, for creating a new *locus* ensuing from the likeness, the similarity, and the memory contained in the many recurring and replicated artefacts.¹⁶

The *locus* deserves further attention: although it arises from repeating ancient formulas, these are recast, reorganized, and reformed to bring about something novel. It is a notion bound up not only with repetition but with disruption (and where would we be without it?), with breaking the mold, meaning that, although it appropriates something that was previously available, it simultaneously establishes a difference and a particularity. In addition, it is a great image for understanding Rossi's fascination with the unforeseeable event that architecture should enable and facilitate, even if it means forgetting—as we shall see—its own constructs so that the latter might finally disclose the singular, individual existence that specifically makes them artefacts. Once again—as with the *Palazzo* in Padua—there is something in their form that was unpredictable in light of the function for which they were built.

All of the great eras of architecture have reposed the architecture of antiquity anew, as if it were a paradigm established forever; but each time it has been reposed differently. Because this same idea of architecture has been manifested in different places, we can understand our own cities by measuring this standard against the actuality of the individual experience of each particular place. What I said at the beginning about the *Palazzo della Ragione* in Padua is perhaps subsumed in this idea, which goes beyond a building's functions and its history, but not beyond the particularity of the place in which it exists" (Rossi 1982: 107).

¹⁶ "Perhaps we can better understand the concept of *locus*, which at times seems rather opaque, by approaching it from another perspective (...) Otherwise, we continue to grasp at outlines which only evaporate and disappear. These outlines (...) trace the relation of architecture to its location—the place of art—and thereby its connections to, and the precise articulation of, the *locus* itself as a singular artifact determined by its space and time, by its topographical dimensions and its form, by its being the seat of a succession of ancient and recent events, by its memory" (Rossi 1982: 107).

3.

All of these ideas—the city as architecture, urban artefacts, analogy, and the *locus*—are also found in Rossi's later views, although they undergo variations. Things are likewise with his rejection of the reduction of form to function, given that its potential is revealed through varied actualities and uses and not through a single (pre-determined) purpose. The latter only enters the equation obliquely, by way of repurposing, such as the repurposing of an artefact on the basis of its form. (For this reason, a building can be built as a convent and later be used as a school.)¹⁷

Each of those variations relates to a central motif, namely abandonment ("I could have called my book *Forgetting Architecture*").¹⁸ In reality, they each relate to a forgetting entwined with remembrance, a relinquishment of Rossi's earlier conception of architecture and its re-configuring as "ritual," comprising repetitions and re-enactments that guarantee "continuity, ... allowing us to live with every change which, because of its inability to evolve, constitutes a destruction."¹⁹

This conception of architecture as ritual likely results from the awareness that architecture as a kind of creation leaves a place after making it into one, or, to be more exact, after the place exhausts its possibilities for growth (the realization of "all that was" lies behind this gloomy prospect). After preparation, appropriation, life, and the workings of time, we become oblivious to architecture as construction while still knowing and holding on to its physiognomy, that is to say, its character, its appearance, its look. We recognize it throughout its modifications because in our memory we retain and assert its identity. (And the way we realize this is through everyday rituals, performed, routinely, and driving us to recognize someplace as *a* place—where we act out our lives; where gestures become imbued with meaning.) If we were to put this in terms of continuity and discontinuity, i.e., in terms of what remains of Rossi's former view of architecture in his new understanding and relation to it, we could say that architecture still matters very much; in fact, it acquires the stately character of ritual, and while it leaves something behind, including a more conventional understanding of built form, it puts something new in its place in tandem

¹⁷ "I have seen old palaces now inhabited by many families, convents transformed into schools, amphitheatres transformed into football fields; and such transformations have always come about most effectively where neither an architect nor some shrewd administrator have intervened" (Rossi 1981: 44)

¹⁸ "As I have said, *Forgetting Architecture* comes to mind as a more appropriate title for this book, since while I may talk about a school, a cemetery, a theatre, it is more correct to say that I talk about life, death, imagination" (Rossi 1981: 78).

¹⁹ "Today if I were to talk about architecture, I would say that it is a ritual rather than a creative process. I say this fully understanding the bitterness and the comfort of the ritual. Rituals give us the comfort of continuity, of repetition, compelling us to an oblique forgetfulness, allowing us to live with every change which, because of its inability to evolve, constitutes a destruction" (Rossi 1981: 37).

with the formula "architecture as ritual," a notion of "building" that includes drawings, collages, and writings:²⁰ architecture on the page. It does this in moments of preparation²¹ but also in moments of contemplation, profoundly marked by melancholy, a feeling that enhances its appeal, since it instils it with a mysterious and meditative character that observes, absorbs and reckons with all that is lost, viz. by means of salvaging what lies destroyed in drawings, collages, and writings, including the autobiographical. Moreover, this makes architecture all the more conscious of its circumstances and the opportunity that these offer for the occurrence of something new—of all that is still promising about it now that the possibility of great things has been "precluded"²² and, moreover, since the element of destruction has entered the scene. Hence, not all is lost: destruction leaves the space open for the novel to emerge, and for what is left unsaid, so that it may peer through time and the fractures, rise from the ruins.

This is the theme of many of Rossi's drawings, including a work that borrows its title from Trakl's *Abendlied, Dieses ist lange her* (1975), but also, e.g., *L'architettura assassinata* (1976).

Instead of longing for architecture and for his positive attitude towards times past, Rossi engages in a series of descriptions that bring together diverse elements in a meaningful way, providing new acumen by making correspondences between things otherwise dissimilar. Where the author of *The Architecture of the City* firmly believed in his craft's ability to promote urbanization, the author of the *Scientific Autobiography* believes in our ability to understand this phenomenon by means of analogy (preserving some of his past optimism). To be sure, analogy makes an appearance in his 1966 book, and an important one at that; almost twenty years later, however, things appear to have changed.²³ No longer "only" a tool for reading the city, analogy also creates it virtually in plans ("a graphic variation of the handwritten manuscript") drawings ("where a line is no longer a line, but writing")

²⁰ Cf. Eisenman in Rossi 1982: 10.

²¹ "The event might not ever happen anyway. I am more interested in the preparations, in what might happen on a midsummer night. In this way, architecture can be beautiful before it is used; there is beauty in the wait, in the room prepared for the wedding, in the flowers and the silver before High Mass" (Rossi 1981: 65–66).

²² "To what, then, could I have aspired in my craft? Certainly to small things, having seen that the possibility of great ones was historically precluded" (Rossi 1981: 23).

²³ See for instance the following excerpt from Peter Eisenman's Introduction to *The Architecture of the City*: "The bourgeois house of Rossi's childhood permitted fantasy, but denied the ordering of type. *The Architecture of the City* attempts, through the apparatus of type, to place the city before us in such a way that, in spite of history, memory can imagine and reconstruct a future time of fantasy. This memory is set into motion through the inventive potential of the typological apparatus, the analogous design process of Rossi's drawings of the 'analogous city' can be seen to evolve directly from his writing of *The Architecture of the City*" (Eisenman in Rossi 1982: 10).

and on the written page of a manuscript ("between writing and drawing") (Rossi 1981: 6). But how? What makes "drawing out the *locus*" possible? (Dodds 1992: 5).²⁴

4.

To begin answering this question, we must discuss Georg Trakl's significance to Aldo Rossi, from whom he seizes a line to use as a title to one of his most famous drawings, *Dieses ist Lange her*. Quoting is an analogical move of sorts, the quote being an analogue that immediately saturates the depiction with the atmosphere of Trakl's poetry. If we wish to describe this atmosphere, we should pay attention to the fact that it is filled with a deliberate silence. As Robert Bly has pointed out, the poet's voice is somewhat absent, and the things portrayed are themselves still and quiet, creating a formidable and meditative ambiance.²⁵

It is indeed remarkable that poetry can be a silent affair, capable of quieting all that usually conceals things from our eyes. Trakl's restraint with words renders visible what would otherwise be hidden; he makes space for everything that he does not put into words, such that "nature has more and more confidence in him" and "more and more creatures live in his poems" (Bly 1961: 2). Silence facilitates attention and awe; things are described, although the poet says very little about them. The atmosphere is not exactly sad (things "live in too deep a joy to be gay"); it is infused with a pensive mode that we might call melancholy. It is striking that even in his darkest poems, which provide a precise image of a destroyed landscape, we are filled not so much with dread as with a calm, contemplative sorrow imbued with reverence: for the ruins (of war, for instance), for all that is lost and that, in a sense, we can make out in the poems.

²⁴ "[T]he analogous design process of Rossi's drawings of the 'analogous city' can be seen to evolve directly from his writing of *The Architecture of the City*. The analogous drawing embodies a changed condition of representation; it exists as the record of its own history. Thus, Rossi's drawings of the city, giving form to their own history, become part of the city, not just a representation of it. They have an authenticity, a reality which is, precisely, that of illusion. This reality may then, in turn, be represented in actual buildings" (Einsenman, "Introduction" in Rossi 1982: 10.)

²⁵ "The poems of Georg Trakl have a magnificent silence in them. It is very rare that he himself talks—for the most part he allows the images to speak for him. Most of the images, anyway, are images of silent things. In a good poem made by Trakl images follow one another in a way that is somehow stately. The images (...) live in too deep a joy to be gay. (...) Everywhere there is the suggestion of this dark silence ... The silence is the silence of things that could speak, but choose not to. The German language has a word for deliberately keeping silence, which English does not have. Trakl uses this word *schweigen* often. When he says *the flowers/Bend without words over the blue pond*, we realise that the flowers have a voice, and that Trakl hears it. They keep their silence in the poems. Since he doesn't put false speeches into the mouths of plants, nature has more and more confidence in him" (Bly 1961: 2).

Another characteristic of Trakl's poetry that is relevant to the matter at hand, namely his connection with Rossi, is the way in which he presents things. Images follow one another demurely, unhurriedly, and fluidly—a very surprising effect, given his profuse use of parataxis. It is as if all the disconnected parts were held together by their muteness. Without creating the impression of being discombobulated, and although they seem severed from one another, his images do not undermine the unity of his poems, the best example of this being *Grodek*—his great and last poem²⁶ (on war).

What Rossi might have found so appealing about Trakl's poetry is that he shares with the latter an ability to portray things—even ruins—such that they are instantly presented in their connectedness without losing any of their particularities. We see affinities, but these do not erase the traits that distinguish each. Moreover, the cohesive-ness of Rossi's images (his drawings and collages) and of Trakl's poems allows an eloquent, meaningful feeling to shine through the cracks of their silence.²⁷ This cohesiveness provides an idea of the whole, even when both deal with ruins (a trait that is perhaps related to the Romantic aspect of their way of looking at things).²⁸ This last aspect—the possibility that silence expresses something, be it in a poem, a drawing, a collage, a plan or a building—is decisive for grasping the way in which analogy functions as a method for Rossi, one which allows him to request that we turn our attention to his work rather than asking him for further words of explanation. If we exert this type of thinking (comparative, analogical), we too will be able to see the parallels between fog and the character of a building, for example—as Rossi was able to do in the passage cited at the beginning of this paper—and to learn from the unpredictable, revealed by similarity.

²⁶ "There is here no foreground or background but a single poetic landscape with colours that have the sharpness of one of El Greco's pictures of Christ at Toledo. The arrangement is almost entirely paratactic: simple subject-predicate phrases are organised into large syntactic units, but these units appear to be disconnected from each other. There is, in the poem's seventeen lines, not a single causal or temporal conjunction; there are two pronominal adverbs which establish an un-emphatic spatial relationship—'darüber', 'darin' ('above which', 'in which'), and an infinitive expressing purpose—'zu grüßen' ('[in order] to greet'): the only connections between the parts of speech given in the poem are simple copulas and the punctuation; it is as though its meaningful totality were formed by a pattern of relatively independent images. The poem achieves its unity without reference to an authorial self" (Stern 1995: 253).

²⁷ Since Rossi, too, believed that his work achieved a "degree of silence": "I have tried to propose buildings which, so to speak, are vehicles for events (...) I can say now that they achieve a silence, a degree of silence which is different from the purism I had striven for in my early designs, where I was concerned primarily with light, walls, shadows, openings. I have realized that it is impossible to recreate an atmosphere. Things are better experienced and then abandoned; initially, everything should be foreseeable, even though what is not foreseeable is all the more fascinating because it remains beyond us" (Rossi 1981: 5).

²⁸ For this reason, it is not so surprising that Aldo Rossi uses lines from Hölderlin when trying to sum up his architecture.

5.

Ludwig Wittgenstein once said of a collection of Trakl's poems: "I do not understand them, but their *tone* makes me happy. It is the tone of true genius."²⁹ For Wittgenstein, this probably meant an acceptance of how things are. At the time, he conceived of the world as being independent of our will,³⁰ the only way to conquer it consisting in recognizing and conforming to it by adopting a happy outlook,³¹ one that removes the *Sorge* not so much by trying to alter the form of life that belongs to the world (which is impossible) but by changing how we live. He might have found a spirit akin to his own in Trakl. Trakl is likewise happy to simply put everything before our eyes without musing on the state of affairs. In both figures, we find the necessary means for attaining a view of the world *sub specie aeterni*, a view that sees things in terms of their infinite possibility—or, as Wittgenstein would say, with the whole space of possibility as their background³²—in the grand scheme of things, in light of which their present configuration becomes meaningful and part of something that surpasses it.

Wittgenstein thought that art provided the right perspective, compelling us to look at objects correctly,³³ and in 1939 he declared that he had come to think that there was another way, a philosophical way, to attain a correct view of the world.³⁴ He introduces it after pondering something that his friend Paul Engelmann had told him, something that made him realize how magnificent it would be if we could observe people engaged in commonplace actions, unaware that they were being watched. He thought that such a spectacle would be superior to anything we could experience by going to the theatre—but it also made him realize that we see these things every day, although not in the same way, that is, as valuable (worthy of being put on stage). It was this that called for a reconfiguration of the customary *Weltanschauung*. He would later refer to this new way of attaining a correct view of the world as "panoramic presentation" (*übersichtliche Darstellung*), namely in § 122 of the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein: 2009), an observation that he revised countless times over the years (from the beginning of the 1930s). In the interest of keeping with our central subject—without getting into much detail, but also without completely foregoing a delineation—we can say that this concept of an overarching view is of fundamental importance; it denotes on the one hand a clear vision (for example of a landscape, a language game, or a city) and on the other hand a method that proceeds by analogy, which compares

²⁹ Quoted in Monk 1991: 186.

³⁰ Cf. Wittgenstein 2003: proposition no. 6.373.

³¹ Cf. Wittgenstein 1979: entry dated 11.6.1916 and Wittgenstein 2003: proposition no. 6.43.

³² Cf. Wittgenstein 1979: entry dated 7.10.1916.

³³ Cf. Wittgenstein 1979: entry dated 20.10.1916.

³⁴ Cf. Wittgenstein 2006: 6–7.

and brings together words, images and fragments, coalescing and re-configuring them by way of intermediate links in a meaningful whole (or indeed several meaningful wholes). The aim is to provide not a final synopsis of things—which would probably be impossible—but rather many synopses that elucidate our form(s) of life, including urban ways of life. Its significance for what occupies us now has to do with the fact that it is very close to what Rossi does when, by way of an analogical procedure, he makes us see the interconnectedness of the things he joins together, juxtaposing them precisely as a Wittgensteinian synopsis of facts is supposed to do. It is also worth noting that both Rossi and Wittgenstein receive some measure of inspiration from discovering the connection between theatre and life. For Rossi, this connection implies the possibility of transformation and change in life by way of the theatre: “the theatre, and perhaps only the theatre, possesses the unique magical ability to transform every situation.” Architecture is also a conduit for change, however, as well as for “everything that is unforeseeable in life.”³⁵

6.

The “unforeseeable” aspect finally brings us back to what we said above about architecture’s being possible on the page. Analogy plays a role: finding analogies is what might assist us to see on the page a simile of what we discover through our experience of the city, comprising the built forms with which we interact in our urban form of life (houses, monuments, cenotaphs, gardens...). Structures that we can enter represent for Rossi, in his drawings of small utensils (which are also built forms, but which we cannot enter), the analogue of the things that have always interested him and that belong both to his experience of the interior and to his interior experience, his personal relation to architecture. Indeed, he sees these small utensils as “miniatures of the fantastic architectures that [he] would encounter later.”³⁶

Similarly, in his work we can find the necessary analogues for understanding architecture, the city, and our lives as a part of the latter.

Over time for Rossi, architecture becomes propitiatory, something

³⁵ “[A]rchitecture [like the theatre] becomes the vehicle for an event we desire, whether or not it actually occurs; and in our desiring it, the event becomes something ‘progressive’ ... it is for this reason that the dimensions of a table or a house are very important—not, as the functionalists thought, because they carry out a determined function, but because they permit other functions. Finally, because they permit everything that is unforeseeable in life” (Rossi 1981: 3).

³⁶ “I have always had a strong interest in objects, instruments, apparatus, tools. Without intending to I used to linger for hours in the large kitchen (...) drawing the coffeepots, the pans, the bottles. I particularly loved the strange shapes of the coffeepots enamelled blue, green, red; they were miniatures of the fantastic architectures that I would encounter later. Today I still love to draw these large coffeepots, which I liken to brick walls, and which I think of as structures that can be entered” (Rossi 1981: 2).

that can trigger what we wish for, but also what we did not know we wanted and were not expecting: the unpredictable appearance of the new, full of meaning. This warrants a quotation, a sort of final word from Rossi on the matter of his architecture that tells us to look at his work and to discover what it meant for him: the impressive declaration "My architecture stands mute and cold."³⁷

Aldo Rossi's recognition of all that was lost—and that did not prevent him from acknowledging what was still possible, what he could still hope for for his architecture—is related to something Wittgenstein said about architecture: that it was only possible in times when there was something that could be expressed, that is to say, that merited an expression.³⁸ We might say that Wittgenstein also viewed such a possibility as belonging to the past. All of this does not mean that we must rest satisfied or happy; it only means that we should not hastily build (in the conventional sense), potentially disfiguring what already exists by introducing a new construction, without first noticing, and letting sink in, the place's spirit, the memory that inhabits its (worn out) form, not allowing it to survive. Through its difference and singularity, each place tells a story—one that, if obliterated by a larger context, is lost in an amorphous whole. Where this singularity can shine through, accumulation, layers, and strata can form the ground for future possibilities that stem from its life.

References

- Dodds, G. 1992. "Drawing from Memory: Context, Locus, and the Difficult Journey." *History / Post-History: Proceedings of the ACSA Southeast Regional Conference*. Savannah: Savannah College of Art and Design (unpaginated).
- Klibansky, R., Panofsky, E. and Saxl, F. 1979. *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy*. Nendeln/Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint.
- Lopes, D. S. 2016. *Melancolia e Arquitectura em Aldo Rossi*. Lisbon: Orfeu Negro.
- Lombardo, P. 2003. *Cities, Words and Images: From Poe to Scorsese*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁷ "'To creak' is the translation of the German *klirren*, which has always struck me in Hölderlin's poem *Halfte des Lebens*. The very title of the poem seems to me a condition of suspension. The little iron banners which Hölderlin never drew himself subsequently invaded my drawings, and I am unable to answer any further the persistent questions I am asked about them except to say that I have translated the last lines of Hölderlin's poem into my architecture: 'The walls stand / mute and cold, in the wind / the banners creak[.]' I concluded one of my lectures at Zurich with this quotation, which I applied to my projects: My architecture stands mute and cold" (Rossi 1981: 44).

³⁸ "Architecture glorifies something (because it endures). Hence there can be no architecture where there is nothing to glorify" (Wittgenstein 2006: 74).

- Monk, R. 1991. *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. London: Vintage Books.
- Onaner, C. 2012. "Rossi Reader of Loos: Architecture in Suspense." *Adolf Loos: Our Contemporary/ Unser Zeitgenosse/ Nosso Contemporâneo*. Yehuda E. Safran (exhibition curator), New York: GSAPP Columbia University: 49–53.
- Rossi, A. 1976. "An Analogical Architecture." *Architecture and Urbanism* 56 (May 1976): 74–76.
- Rossi, A. 1981. *A Scientific Autobiography*. D. Ghirardo and J. Ockman (transl.), P. Eisenman (intro.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Rossi, A. 1982. *The Architecture of the City*. D. Ghirardo and J. Ockman (transl.), P. Eisenman (intro., rev. for the American edition by A. Rossi and P. Eisenman), Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Stern, J. P. 1995. *The Dear Purchase. A Theme in German Modernism*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Trakl, G. 1961. *Twenty Poems of Georg Trakl*. James Wright and Robert Bly (transl. and selection). Madison: The Sixties Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1979. *Notebooks: 1914–1916*. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Wittgenstein, L. 2003. *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Wittgenstein, L. 2009. *Philosophische Untersuchungen / Philosophical Investigations*. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (transl.), P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (rev. fourth ed.), UK: Willey-Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. 2006. *Vermischte Bemerkungen: Eine Auswahl aus dem Nachlaß / Culture & Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.