City, Territory and Architecture

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Ugliness in architecture in the Australian, American, British and Italian milieus: Subtopia between the 1950s and the 1970s

Marianna Charitonidou[1,2,3*]

Abstract

The article examines the reorientations of the appreciation of ugliness within different national contexts in a comparative and relational frame, juxtaposing the Australian, American, British and Italian milieus. It also explores the ways in which the transformation of the urban fabric and the effect of suburbanization were perceived in the aforementioned national contexts. Special attention is paid to the production and dissemination of how the city's uglification was conceptualized between the 1950s and 1970s. Pivotal for the issues that this article addresses are Ian Nairn's *Outrage: On the Disfigurement of Town and Countryside*, Robin Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness*, Donald Gazzard's *Australian Outrage: The Decay of a Visual Environment*, and the way the phenomenon of urban expansion is treated in these books in comparison with other books from the four national contexts under study, such as Ludovico Quaroni's *La torre di Babele* and Reyner Banham's *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*. Particular emphasis is placed on Boyd's articles in *The Architectural Review* between 1951 and 1970. At the core of the article is the analysis of the debates around ugliness between the 1950s and 1970s within the British, Italian, American and Australian contexts.

Keywords: Subtopia, Featurism, Austerica, Arboraphobia, Outrage, ugliness, Australia, Italy, United States of America, UK, The Architectural Review, New Brutalism, Tendenza, Neorealism, Aldo Rossi, Ludovico Quaroni, Robin Boyd, Reyner Banham, Ian Nairn, Gordon Cullen, Townscape movement, Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi, Ernesto Nathan Rogers

Introduction

To better grasp the exchanges between the four different cultural and socio-economic contexts under study, particular emphasis should be placed on a relational analysis of the production and dissemination of the ways in which the city's uglification was conceptualized between the 1950s and 1970s. The methods of transnational history are useful for addressing the tension that exists due to the fact that architecture as a field of knowledge is related to an international culture, while its practice is a local experience. The article departs from the conviction that an analysis of Robin Boyd's conception of ugliness is useful for better understanding the debates on ugliness within the four contexts under study in this article (Charitonidou 2021c). At the core of the article is the idea that the evolution of the debates around ugliness in architecture and urbanism in the British, Italian, American and Australian milieus should be interpreted in relation to the social changes in relation style, building technology, scale of construction, and the expansion to suburban areas. During the period under study in this article a particular emphasis was placed on debates concerning the emergence of new aesthetic models, as in the case of New Brutalism within the British context and the debates around the notion 'continuity' or 'continuità' within the Italian context. To better understand the reasons behind the diverging paths within the different national contexts, it is of pivotal importance to relate them to the changing

*Correspondence: mchariton@ethz.ch

[1] Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (GTA), Department of Architecture, ETH Zürich, Stefano-Franscini-Platz 5, 8093 Zurich, Switzerland
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

social structures of post-war societies within the different contexts under study.

An aspect that should also be taken into account when we study the evolution of the concept of ugliness in architectural discourse is the social status of the readers of the architectural and urban magazines in the pages of which the debates around ugliness were developed. For instance, it would be useful to examine to what extent the authors and readers of *The Architectural Review* belong to specific social groups. Another aspect that should also be taken into consideration when we examine the conception of ugliness in architectural and urban design is the fact that architectural design address different scales. This multiplicity of scales invites us to wonder to what extent the conception of ugliness in architecture and urban design is transformed when interpretations of architectural and urban design move from scale to scale. Therefore, a question that emerges is the following: to what extent the conception of ugliness in architecture differs when we evaluate urban fabric, a given building layout and shape, an interior space, or a choice of specific materials and connecting details? To respond to this question in relation to the Italian context, we should bear in mind that Italian post-war craftmanship in the construction industry is an underrated component of architectural quality. A project like Torre Velasca by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (Studio BBPR) is useful for investigating how provocation at different scales was achieved. A tension that is useful for recognizing what was at stake in post-war debates concerning the notion of ugliness in relation to the question of morality in architecture is that between New Brutalist anti-art and anti-beauty aesthetics in the UK and Tendenza's anti-aesthetic and anti-elitist stance in Italy.

Australian ugliness and 'Featurism': 'Austerica' and 'Arboraphobia'

Of great importance for understanding the evolution of the debates around ugliness in architecture in Australia between the 1950s and 1970s is the impact of Robin Boyd's work, and more particularly of his seminal book *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971; Baracco et al. 2017; Phillips and Raisbeck 2020), but also of his articles in *The Architectural Review on architectural and urban epistemology*. As Andrew Leach remarks, in "The Gold Coast Moment", Boyd used the term 'Austerica' to interpret the 'Tiki aesthetic' characterising the neon signs and a "rainbow of plastic paint' mere extensions of a cultural surface that captured, too deep suntans and what one writer called a 'climate dictated exposure" (Leach 2015a). Informative for understanding Boyd's conception of ugliness are the photographs of Australian photographer Nigel Buesst that were included in the 1968 and 1971 editions of *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd

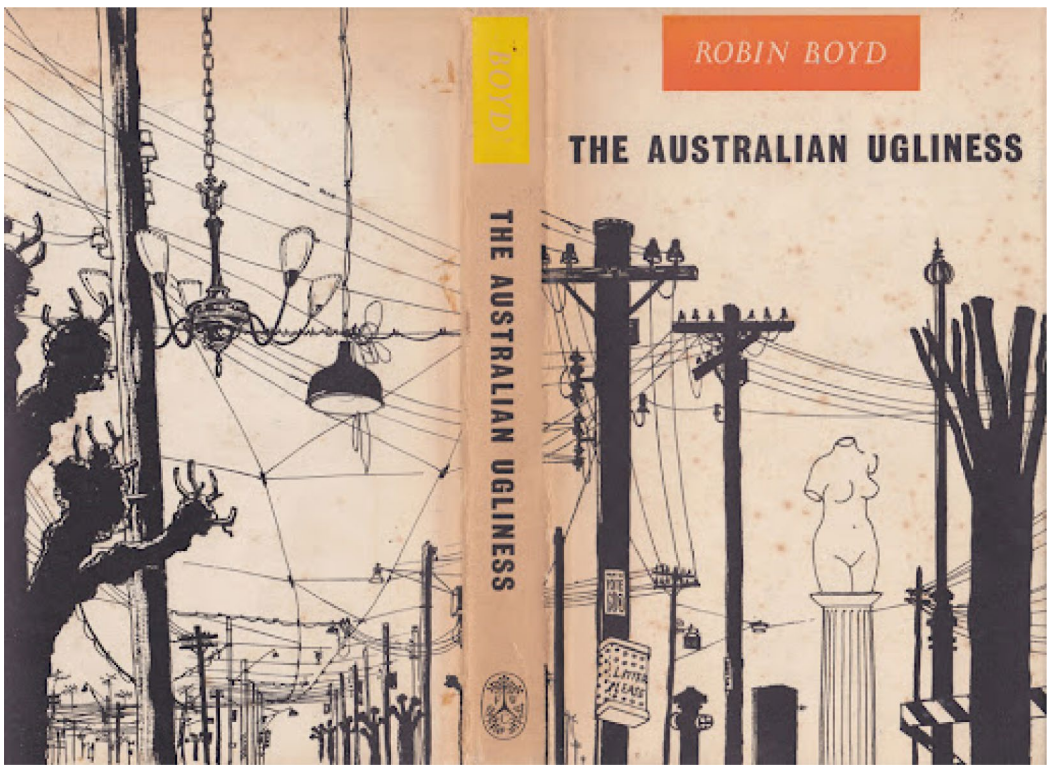


Fig. 1 Front cover and back cover of Boyd (1960) © Estate of Robin Boyd, courtesy Robin Boyd Foundation. https://robinboyd.org.au/

1968, 1971) (Fig. 1), as well as the photographs taken by Boyd during the late 1950s when he spent some time as visiting professor at MIT and travelled in the United States of America, and the illustrations he included in *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971) (Fig. 2).

Of particular interest for the reflections developed in this article is an ensemble of neologisms that Boyd used in *The Australian Ugliness*, such as 'Featurism', 'Austerica', and 'Arboraphobia' (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971). 'Featurism' referred to "the subordination of the essential whole and the accentuation of selected separate features" (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 23, 1968, 1971, 2013). As John Macarthur argues, Boyd agreed with the distinction that Kant draws between aesthetic judgment and pleasure (Macarthur 2019, 51; Stead et al 2021). The assessment of the Australian post-war urban development seems less about how to design than about the delusion of modern design. Boyd remarked regarding the value of appreciating ugliness or the unbeautiful: "A capacity to appreciate the unbeautiful is a quality which no Featurist would envy and few would be interested in cultivating; yet this is the key to depth in appreciation of architecture…" (Boyd 1960, 224, 1963a, 1968, 1971). According to Mirjana Lozanovska, "[t]he term 'Featurism' was coined by Boyd in [*The Australian Ugliness*] […] to denote what he believed was an Australian habit to "cloak and camouflage": shallow formal and decorative excess in architectural design and unthinking, ill-considered signage, hence visual pollution of the urban environment" (Lozanovska 2015, 2018). In Macarthur's view, "Featurism is an internationally observable aesthetical and ethical failing, but one that Boyd claims to reach an apogee in the Australia of the 1950s". Macarthur, in "Robin Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness*, ugliness, and liberal education", analyses Boyd's critique of popular taste, comparing his understanding of ugliness in the aforementioned book with that developed in the pages of *The Architectural Review* (Macarthur 2019, 51; Stead et al 2021). Naomi Stead has described *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960, 224, 1963a, 1968, 1971) as "a kind of taxonomy of local ugliness", and as "an account of the social and cultural elements that this ugliness was intended to hide" (Stead 2017; Stead et al 2021).

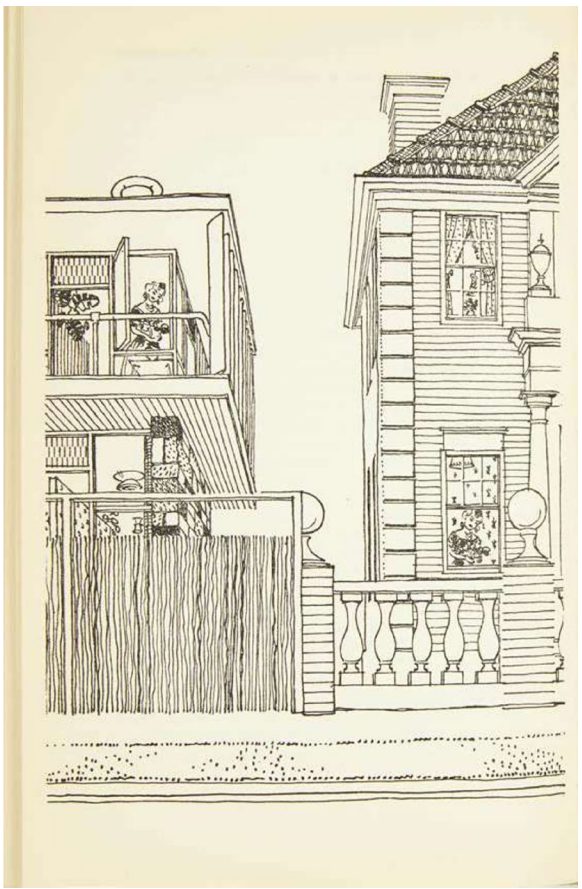


Fig. 2 Illustration from Boyd (1960, 174). Credits: Roy Simpson Collection, RMIT Design Archives. Illustration by Robin Boyd © Estate of Robin Boyd, courtesy Robin Boyd Foundation. https://robinboyd.org.au/

During the post-war years, a reorientation from the cross-cultural exchanges between Australia and the UK, as far as architectural discourse is concerned towards the cross-fertilization between Australia and the United States of America took place. This shift should be taken into account when we try to decipher the specificities of the understanding of ugliness in Boyd's thought. Boyd was influenced by the ideas of the so-called "Townscape movement" and Ian Nairn and Gordon Cullen's concepts of 'subtopia' and 'outrage'. In parallel, Boyd's understanding of ugliness was informed by Reyner Banham's analysis of New Brutalism, in his well-known article "The New Brutalism" published in 1955 in *The Architectural Review* (Banham 1955) to which Boyd casually contributed. Banham, in the aforementioned article, examined the anti-aesthetics of the exhibition "Parallel of Life and Art" held at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) in London in 1953. This exhibition was curated by Alison and Peter Smithson, Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, who among others were members of the Independent Group. More specifically, Banham described the New Brutalist aesthetics characterising this exhibition "as being anti-art, or at any rate anti-beauty in the classical aesthetic sense of the word." (Banham 1955, 359). As I have mentioned in "Autopia as new perceptual regime: mobilized gaze and architectural design", "Alison Smithson saw 'New Brutalism' as a gesture against academicism" (Charitonidou 2021a, 15). At the centre of New Brutalism was the intention to redefine the way of life. Despite

the divergences between the way the Smithsons and Banham understood New Brutalism, they shared an interest in "the transformation of the way of life, the reinvention of the experience of inhabitation and the ethical implications of the way of life was central for both." (Charitonidou 2021a, 15).

In "The Sad End of New Brutalism", Boyd criticised Reyner Banham's understanding of New Brutalism. He argued that his analysis of New Brutalism, due to his effort to legitimise Alison and Peter Smithson's work, neglected the importance of several buildings and architects that could have been described as New Brutalist. Characteristically, he remarked: "the only straightforward and consistent rule followed by Dr. Banham was that New Brutalism was anything the Smithsons permitted" (Boyd 1967, 11). The aforementioned article, which could be interpreted as published in *The Architectural Review* in 1967, was critique of Banham's book entitled *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* published a year earlier (Banham 1966). Despite his criticism of Banham's conception of New Brutalism, Boyd was supportive of certain ideals of New Brutalism, and believed that it was among the very few post-war movements that were revolutionary. This becomes evident in his following words: "The greatest hope of every evangelical movement like New Brutalism is that it will lead the world away from seductive aesthetic pleasures to the pure intelligence of building" (Boyd 1967, 11). Boyd also remarked that "the New Brutalism was certainly the most articulate of all the attempts to re-establish the original integrity and strength of modern architecture that occurred after the soft decade following the war" (Boyd 1967, 9). He argued that New Brutalism was unoriginal in the sense that its ideals were not new. He argued that "unoriginality is of course the weakness of the argument for New Brutalism as an independent movement" (Boyd 1967, 10).

Another important book for understanding the evolution of the debates around ugliness in Australia is *Australian Outrage: The Decay of a Visual Environment* edited by Donald Gazzard (Gazzard 1966) (Fig. 3). This book, which was forwarded by J.D. Pringle, brought together the photographs that were displayed in an exhibition held in Sydney in 1964, that is to say four years after the publication of Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971). At the core of this exhibition, which was supported by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, was the decay of the Australian visual environment.

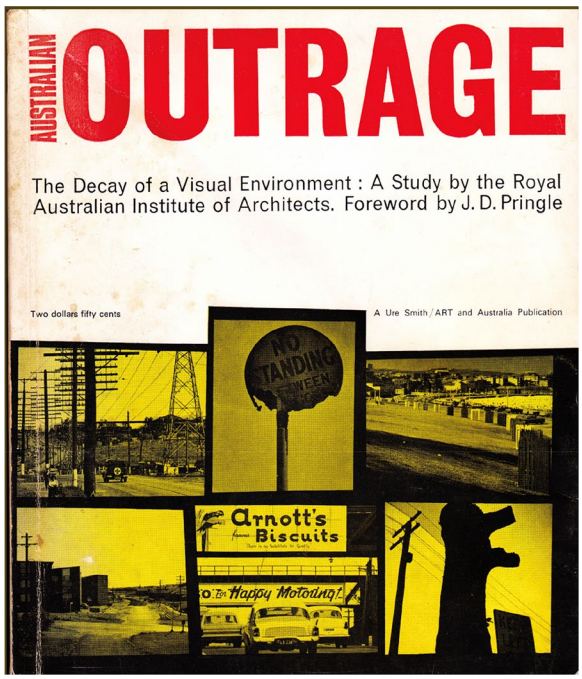


Fig. 3 Cover of Gazzard (1966)

From debacle of popular taste to deferred judgement: American Suburbia

An author that played a significant role in the evolution of the debates around ugliness in the United States of America was Mary Mix Foley, who published "The debacle of popular taste" in *Architectural Forum* in 1957 (Foley 1957). Foley introduced the aforementioned article with the following question: "Why are there so many bad buildings in America?" (Foley 1957, 141). Foley argued that "the people who build, buy, sell, live, and work in the suburbias, the Main Streets, and the roadtowns of America were eminently satisfied with the established ugliness without realising it is ugly (Foley 1957)." Peter Blake, who served on the editorial staff of *Architectural Forum* between 1950 and 1972, published *God's Own Junkyard: The planned deterioration of America's landscape* (Blake 1964) seven years after Foley's "The debacle of popular taste" (Foley 1957). Boyd wrote some articles for *Architectural Forum*, including "Has Success Spoiled Modern Architecture?" published in 1959 (Boyd 1959). Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown published "Significance for A & P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas" (Venturi and Scott Brown 1968), and Denise Scott Brown published "An Alternate Proposal that Builds on the Character and Population of South Street" (Scott Brown 1971a) in *Architectural Forum* during the period that Blake was part of its editorial staff. Denise Scott Brown moved to Philadelphia to study Planning at the University of Pennsylvania in 1958 after having studied at the Architectural Association where she was influenced by Alison and Peter Smithson's approach and New Brutalism. Scott Brown has described the New Brutalists as "a movement of the 1950s and 1960s that related

architecture to social realism" (Scott Brown 2004, 109; Charitonidou 2022b). She has mentioned regarding the British context when she relocated in London in 1952: "I landed in post-World War II England amidst the look-back-in-anger generation, in a society in upheaval, where social activism was part of education" (Scott Brown 2004, 109; Charitonidou 2022b).

During her studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Scott Brown attended the courses of urban sociologist Herbert Gans, who a year before her resettlement in the United States of America conducted an in situ study in West End in Boston, a slum cleared area. The study of Gans in West End concluded in his book entitled *Us in The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (Gans 1962; Charitonidou 2022b), which investigated the everyday life of the inhabitants. A book by Gans that is important for analysing the criteria according to which an urban or architectural artefact is evaluated as ugly or beautiful is *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (Gans 1974; Charitonidou 2022b). Scott Brown's fascination with Gans's 'new objectivity' goes hand in hand with her interest in the so-called non-judgemental perspective. Regarding this, she has noted: "But we don't say we don't judge. We say we defer judgement. In deferring it, we let more data into the judgement, we make the judgement more sensitive" (Scott Brown in Cook and Klotz 1973, 254; Charitonidou 2022b). The photographs that Scott Brown took at South Street west of Broad Street in Philadelphia, one can discern the impact of Gans's approach on her perspective. Another seminal book by Gans is *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (Gans 1967; Charitonidou 2022b). Three years after the publication of the latter, in 1970, Robert Venturi, Steven Izenour and Denise Scott Brown coordinated the study "Remedial Housing for Architects or Learning from Levittown", which was held in collaboration with their students at Yale University (Figs. 4, 5).

In the themes addressed in the course entitled "Learning from Levittown Studio" that Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour taught during the fall semester in 1970, we can easily discern the influence of Herbert Gans's work. In the framework of the aforementioned course, special emphasis was placed on the analysis of the following aspects concern the profile of the citizens of Levittown: family organisation, education, ambitions and values, attitudes, leisure, use of house, occupation, social contacts, media, possessions, orbits

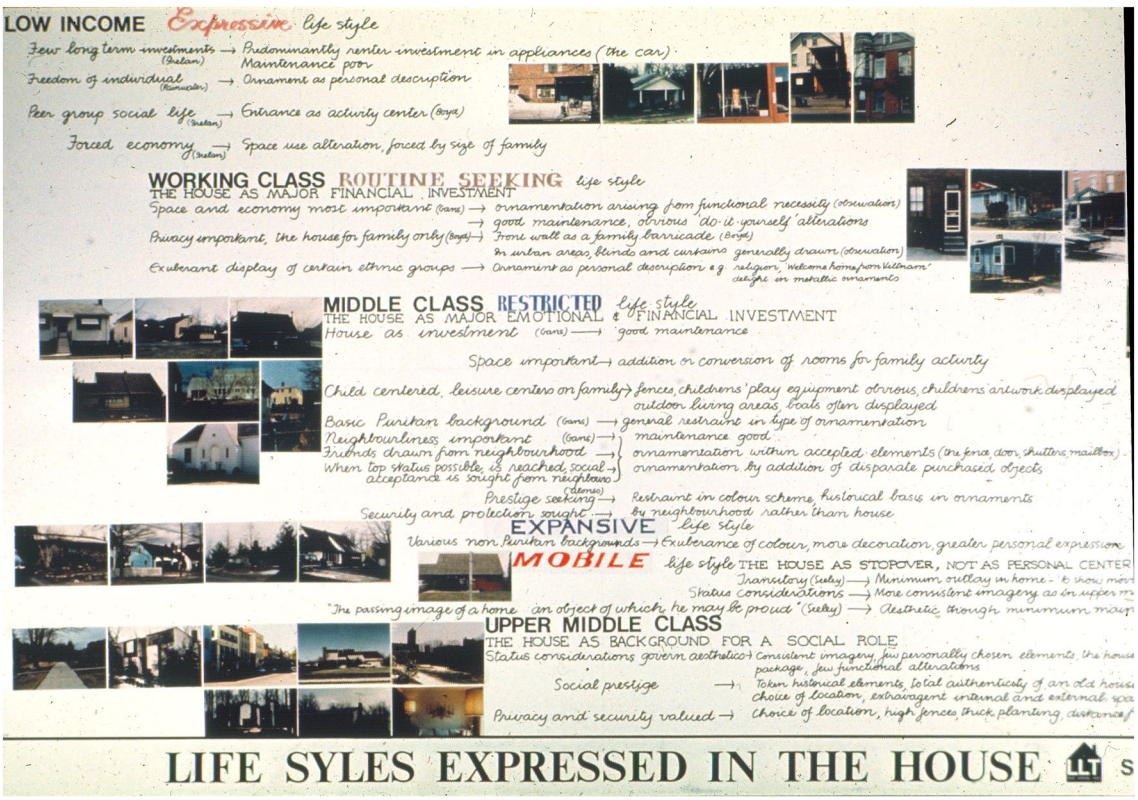


Fig. 4 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, learning from Levittown Studio, Fall 1970. Life styles expressed in the house. Credits: Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. https://www.design.upenn.edu/architectural-archives/venturi-scott-brown-and-associates

Fig. 5 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, learning from Levittown Studio, Fall 1970. Life styles expressed in the house. Credits: Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. https://www.design.upenn.edu/architectural-archives/venturi-scott-brown-and-associates

of mobility, and central investments. Of great interest is the way the groups of citizens were categorised in the posters produced. These groups were the following: (a) a first group concerning low income-black matriarchal families with 7 years of education, which were occupied mainly as workers and unemployed and corresponded to approximately 7% of the population New Haven, (b) a second group concerning low income-Italian origin-urban families with 8 years of education, which were occupied mainly as operatives and labourers and corresponded to approximately 10% of New Haven (c) a third group concerning suburban-working class families with 8–11 years of education, which were occupied mainly as operatives and labourers and corresponded to approximately 10% of the population of New Haven, (d) a fourth group concerning suburban-low-middle class families with High School and 2 years College education, which were occupied mainly as craftsmen, salesmen and clerical and labourers and corresponded to approximately 35% of the population of New Haven , and (e) a fifth group concerning upper-middle class families with 4 years College education, which were occupied mainly in business and corresponded to approximately 20% of the population of New Haven, (Fig. 6). Telling is Scott Brown's remark that architects, instead of trying to adopt the perspective of sociologists, should try "to look at the information of sociology from an architectural viewpoint" (Scott Brown in Cook and Klotz 1973, 252; Charitonidou 2022b, 2022c, 2021e). At the core of the 'Learning from Levittown Studio' that Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour taught during the fall semester in 1970 were the ideas of advocacy planning and New Left critiques, which had an important impact on the pedagogical approaches at the Department of City Planning at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1950s (Charitonidou 2021e, 2022c). One of the aspects that makes Scott Brown's viewpoint original is the fact that it aims to bring together her interest in the non-judgmental viewpoint of the "new objectivity" of Gans's understanding of urban sociology and her passion for the aesthetics of pop art. Regarding this issue, she has highlighted: "I like the fact that the influences upon us are the pop artist on one side and the sociologist on the other" (Scott Brown in Cook and Klotz 1973, 252; Charitonidou 2022b). Enlightening regarding how the sociological perspective meets the pop artist viewpoint are Scott Brown's following words:

> *The forms of the pop landscape [...] speak to our condition not only aesthetically but on many levels of necessity, from the social necessity to rehouse the*

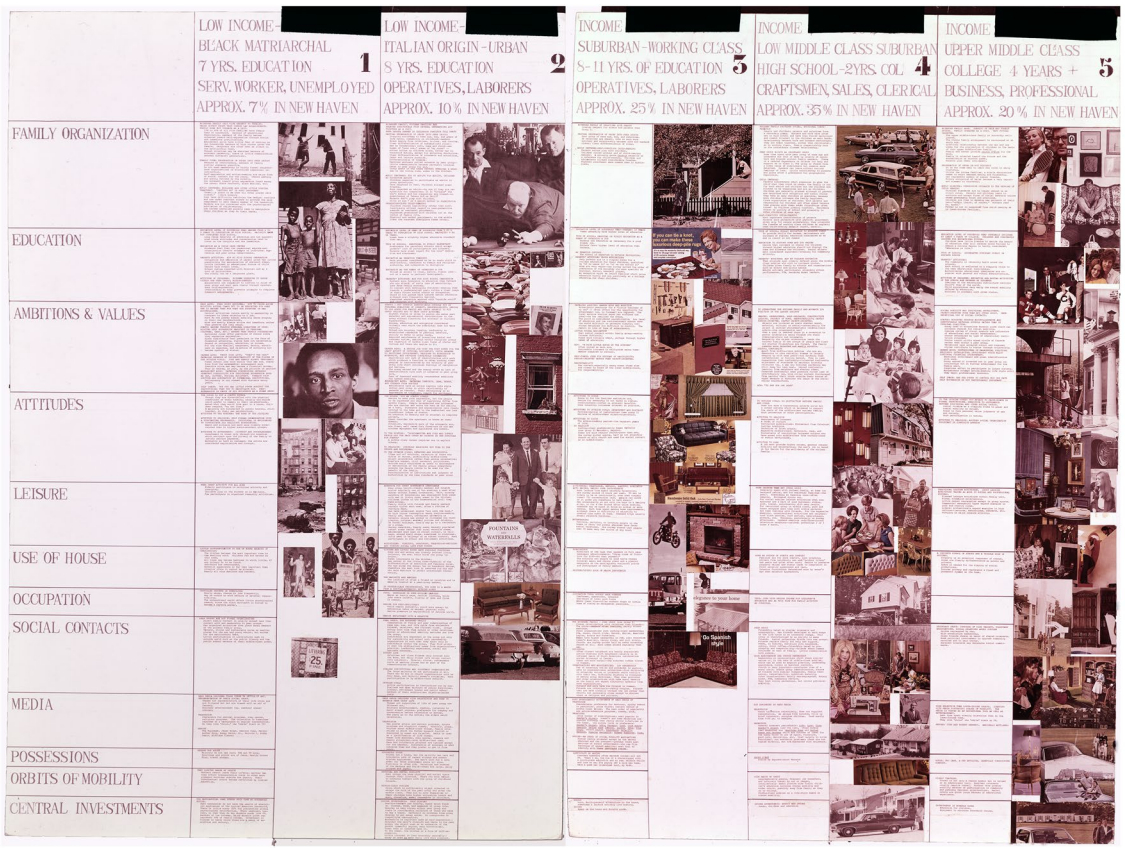


Fig. 6 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, learning from Levittown Studio, Fall 1970. Life styles expressed in the house. Credits: Venturi, Scott Brown Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania. https://www.design.upenn.edu/architectural-archives/venturi-scott-brown-and-associates

poor without destroying them to the architectural necessity to produce buildings and environments that others will need and like. (Scott Brown 1971b, 28).

Of great importance for understanding the evolution of the debates around ugliness in architecture in Australia is the impact of the debates developed in the United States of America, and more particularly in the West Coast, on the approaches in Australia. To better grasp the concept of 'Austerica' and its evolution within the Australian context, it would be useful to examine its relation to the aesthetic appropriation of the Gold Coast Infrastructure during the late 1950s and the 1960s (Bosman et al. 2016). During the 1970s, the ideas developed in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Scott Brown et al. 1972) were imported to the Australian architectural discourse. As Andrew Leach reminds us in "Leaving Las Vegas, Again", some debates developed in The Papua New Guinea University of Technology played an important role during this process (Leach 2015b). A trip coordinated by John Gollings, Malcolm Horner, Tony Styant-Browne and Julie Jame organised in January 1974 included a study of Surfers Paradise in Gold Coast, which was based on the model of the "Studio LLV: Learning from Las Vegas or Form Analysis as Design Research (The Great Proletariat Cultural Locomotive): Final Presentation" directed by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour in Fall 1968 (Smith 2009, 126). An investigation of what the aforementioned research team examined during this trip could help us better understand the impact of the American discourse around ugliness on how the aesthetic of "Gold Coast" was perceived.

'Subtopia' within the British context: 'Outrage' and ugliness

The debates around "Townscape movement" are important for grasping the conception of ugliness within the British context during the 1950s. The activities of Hubert de Cronin Hastings as editor of *The Architectural Review* are of great significance for understanding

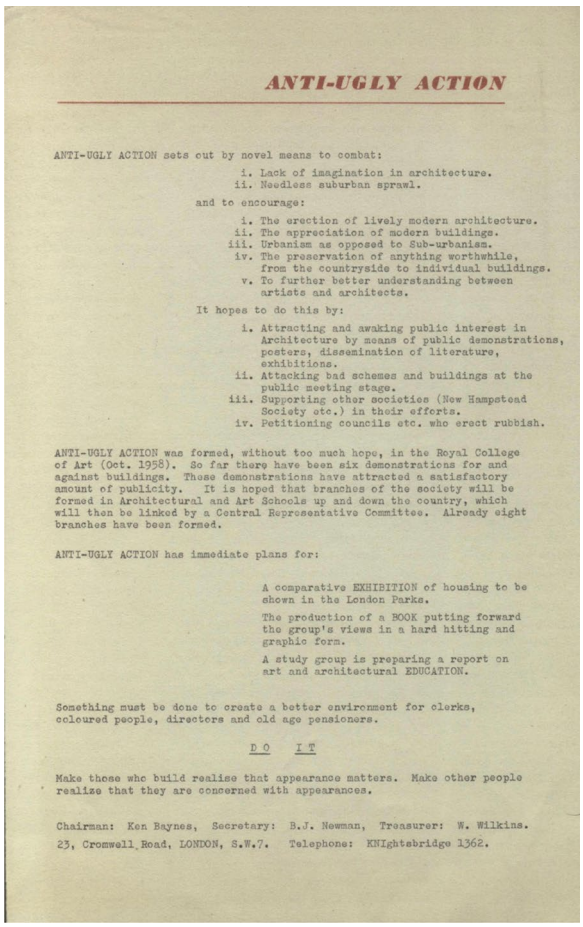
the context within which the ideas of "Townscape movement" emerged. John Macarthur has related Hastings's approach in *The Architectural Review* concerning ugliness to liberalism, arguing that Hastings "would accept modernist featurism alongside meretricious historicism and vernacular mis-appropriations of style" (Macarthur 2019, 56; Stead et al 2021). An ensemble of articles aiming to explain the guiding principles of "Townscape movement" appeared in the pages of *The Architectural Review* starting in October 1948 (Cullen 1948a, b; Erten 2009). Gordon Cullen was along with Ian Nairn one of the main authors of the so-called "Townscape movement" articles until 1959, when he stopped collaborating with *The Architectural Review* (Engler 2016). Ian Nairn started collaborating with *The Architectural Review* later than Gordon Cullen, that is to say in 1954, but departed ten years later than Cullen, that is to say in 1969.

Despite the fact that the ideas at the core of the "Townscape movement" were already present in an ensemble of articles published in *The Architectural Review* since 1948, an important turning point was the issue of December 1949. This issue included not only Hastings's "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy", which was published under the pseudonym Ivor de Wolfe (de Wolfe 1949; Aitchison 2011, 2012; Macarthur and Aitchison 2012), but also Gordon Cullen's Townscape casebook (Cullen 1949). An article entitled "Civilia. The End of Sub Urban Man" authored by Hastings in 1971 is of great importance for understanding his critique of suburbanization (Wolfe 1971). Another text that was published during the 1970s in *The Architectural Review* and is useful for revisiting the concepts of 'outrage' and 'subtopia' is Ian Nairn's "Outrage Twenty Years After" (Nairn 1975). As Nairn remarks, in "Outrage", "[w]ithin the town the agents of Subtopia are demolition and decay, buildings replaced by bijou gardens, car-parks and underscale structures" (Nairn 1955) (Fig. 7).

According to Mathew Aitchison, "Townscape's proponents saw ugliness, sprawl and blight as symptomatic of the general collapse of the design professions' ability to engage with real-world problems" (Aitchison 2013a, 415). The "Townscape movement" should be interpreted in relation to the critiques of the newly built New Towns and the suburbanization effect that accompanied their creation (Charitonidou 2021f, 2021g, 2021h). Another aspect that is of great significance for comprehending the ideology of "Townscape movement" is the impact that the generalised use of the car on the urban and suburban landscapes (Charitonidou 2021a; 2021c, 2021d, 2022d).

Another aspect that should also be taken into account when we try to understand the specificities of the conception of ugliness within the British context is the Anti-Ugly Action (AUA), which was a group formed by students at the Royal College of Arts (RCA) to protest against the buildings that they considered ugly (Fig. 8). As Gavin Stamp remarks in *Anti-Ugly: Excursions in English Architecture and Design*, "[i]n December 1958, [...] Anti-Ugly Action demonstrated outside two new buildings they found offensive: Caltex House in the Old Brompton Road and Agriculture House (the monumental Neo-Georgian

Fig. 7 Gordon Cullen's illustrations enlivened the 'Outrage' special issue of *The Architectural Review* of June 1955



ANTI-UGLY ACTION

ANTI-UGLY ACTION sets out by novel means to combat:

i. Lack of imagination in architecture.
ii. Needless suburban sprawl.

and to encourage:

i. The erection of lively modern architecture.
ii. The appreciation of modern buildings.
iii. Urbanism as opposed to Sub-urbanism.
iv. The preservation of anything worthwhile, from the countryside to individual buildings.
v. To further better understanding between artists and architects.

It hopes to do this by:

i. Attracting and awaking public interest in Architecture by means of public demonstrations, posters, dissemination of literature, exhibitions.
ii. Attacking bad schemes and buildings at the public meeting stage.
iii. Supporting other societies (New Hampstead Society etc.) in their efforts.
iv. Petitioning councils etc. who erect rubbish.

ANTI-UGLY ACTION was formed, without too much hope, in the Royal College of Art (Oct. 1958). So far there have been six demonstrations for and against buildings. Those demonstrations have attracted a satisfactory amount of publicity. It is hoped that branches of the society will be formed in Architectural and Art Schools up and down the country, which will then be linked by a Central Representative Committee. Already eight branches have been formed.

ANTI-UGLY ACTION has immediate plans for:

A comparative EXHIBITION of housing to be shown in the London Parks.

The production of a BOOK putting forward the group's views in a hard hitting and graphic form.

A study group is preparing a report on art and architectural EDUCATION.

Something must be done to create a better environment for clerks, coloured people, directors and old age pensioners.

D O I T

Make those who build realise that appearance matters. Make other people realise that they are concerned with appearances.

Chairman: Ken Baynes, Secretary: B.J. Newman, Treasurer: W. Wilkins.
23, Cromwell Road, LONDON, S.W.7. Telephone: KNightsbridge 1362.

Fig. 8 Anti-Ugly Action (AUA) manifesto, March 1959. Source: Stamp (2015)

headquarters of the Farmers' Union, since demolished) in Knightsbridge" (Stamp 2013, vi). According to Timothy Hyde, AUA's critique of ugliness "was an unabashedly aesthetic critique rather than a moral or material one" (Hyde 2019, 64). However, Ken Baynes, who was the Chairman of AUA, has related the approach of the AUA to the ideas of the Independent Group of which Alison and Peter Smithson were members along with Lawrence Alloway, Reyner Banham, Colin St John Wilson, Richard Hamilton, Nigel Henderson, John McHale and Eduardo Paolozzi (Stamp 2015). As Hyde reminds us, in *Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye*, "Ian Nairn […] addressed the embers of Anti-Ugly Action in a lecture just after the group was founded" (Hyde 2019, 65).

During the 1950s, within different contexts an ensemble of terms emerged to describe the new features of urban and suburban landscapes related to the phenomenon of suburbanization and the generalised use of the car. Such a term within the British context was 'subtopia' used by Ian Nairn, in *Outrage: On the Disfigurement of Town and Countryside*, which collected several articles written for *The Architectural Review* during the early 1950s and was published in 1956 (Nairn 1955). Nairn defined 'subtopia' as "the annihilation of the site, the steamrollering of all individuality of place to one uniform and mediocre pattern", as well as "the legalization of the urge to dump on a national scale" (Nairn cited in Parnell 2014). As Mathew Aitchison remarks, in "The Boyd Ultimatum", "[t]oday, many of the developments Nairn observed are commonplace but in the mid 1950s they were distinct enough to be grouped under one Nairn term, 'subtopia'" (Aitchison 2013b, 61).

Of great significance for the dissemination of Nairn's ideas were the illustrations by Gordon Cullen (Fig. 7), which have many similarities with Boyd's own illustrations in *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960; 1963a; 1968, 1971). Particularly informative regarding Nairn's understanding of 'subtopia' and 'outrage' are the episodes of the series *Nairn Across Britain*[1], which were released by BBC the same year as Reyner Banham's film *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*, that is to say in 1972 (Dimendberg 2006).

The conception of architecture within the post-war Italian context: Ugliness in Tendenza and Neorealism

Pivotal for understanding the conception of ugliness within the Italian context are the debates around Tendenza and Neorealist architecture. Taking as main actors Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Aldo Rossi, for the former, and Ludovico Quaroni, for the latter, my aim here is to clarify their respective positions regarding post-war city and explains how they perceived the relation of post-war (sub)urbanization to city's uglification. The objective is to shed light on how ugliness was instrumentalized as a productive category in post-war Italian architecture and on how Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Ludovico Quaroni and Aldo Rossi's aesthetic views towards ugliness incorporated post-war urban reality. It also reveals how the anti-aesthetic and anti-elitist stance of Tendenza and Neorealist architecture were applied in Torre Velasca (1950–1958) by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (BBPR) and Tiburtino district (1949–1954) by Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi, in collaboration with certain young Roman architects, such as Carlo Aymonino (Charitonidou 2020). Tendenza and Neorealist architecture shared the effort to reformulate the ways we judge architecture through new models, corresponding to urban expansion, and establishing criteria that take into consideration the struggle

[1] Series *Nairn Across Britain*, 1972, BBC: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01q1km2/episodes/player

for social reconstruction, characterizing post-war Italian cities. The emergence of new models of city's aesthetic evaluation are interpreted as a symptom of the debate regarding identity's reconstruction after the fascist years. Within this context where continuity was understood as antidote to modernism's crisis, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Ludovico Quaroni and Aldo Rossi argued that architects are responsible for society.

The term 'tendenza' was originally employed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers in "Elogio della tendenza", in 1946 (Rogers 1946). Rogers also referred to 'tendenza', in "Ortodossia dell'eterodossia", in 1957 (Rogers 1957, 4) and in *Esperienza dell'architettura*, in 1958 (Rogers 1958). He drew a distinction between the concepts of 'tendenza', style and coherence, defining 'tendenza' as "an act of modesty that integrates the activity of each individual in the culture of their own epoch, inviting them to consider their selves before anything else as parts of society" (Rogers 1958; Charitonidou 2020). Rossi first employed the term "tendenza" in 1969, in the introduction to the second Italian edition of *L'architettura della città* (Rossi 1969a) and in "L'architettura della ragione come architettura di Tendenza", in the catalogue of the exhibition *Illuminismo e architettura del '700 veneto* (Rossi 1969b). His definition of architecture of reason as tendenza architecture lied on the need for a concept at the crossroads of realism and rationalism, which challenged the concept of avant-garde, rejecting utopia.

Rogers's temporally-driven aesthetic model, which lied on the concept of continuity and the idea of "sensing history", is the result of his encounter with Enzo Paci's phenomenological approach. Rogers believed that a balance between utility and beauty should be found, while Paci considered that architects should not conceive society as "theorized or ideologized or structured beforehand according to the perspectives of a given sociology" (Paci 1957). Instead, they should "make alive and real social relationship of […] [their] country, with its needs and miseries, with its illusions and hard sense of reality, of the limits and conditions of life." (Paci 1957) Paci was convinced that, to achieve such an engaged view, it is indispensable to see the things the way they are. In his *Diario Fenomenologico*, he defined as phenomenon "what appears, what we see as we see it and we can faithfully describe, without judging it before we can see it precisely as it is" (Paci 1961). Rogers' view in "The Image: The Architect's Inalienable Vision" (Rogers 1966) drew on Paci's phenomenological approach.

The adjective neorealist connoted an anti-abstract attitude. Neorealist architecture, as "collective and timeless mode to building" (Casciato 2000, 48), could be interpreted in relation to Antonio Gramsci's invitation to formulate "a new way of feeling and of seeing reality" (Gramsci cited in Casciato 2000), which is close to Paci's call to "see the things the way they are". Neorealist architecture was a "Roman School" product, with protagonists Mario Ridolfi and Ludovico Quaroni, both participants of Associazione per l'Architettura Organica (APAO), founded by Bruno Zevi in 1944 and driven by the conviction that modern architecture's liberation from rigid functionalism would permit to humanism and democracy to serve as liberating forces in post-war Italian society. Organic architecture's impetus was based on "social, technical and artistic activity directed towards creating the climate for a new democratic civilisation" (L'Associazione per l'architettura organica 1945). Jacques Rancière's conception of democracy could elucidate organic architecture's relation to democracy. For Rancière, democracy is neither "a form of government nor a style of social life", but "an act of political subjectivization that disturbs the police order by polemically calling into question the aesthetic coordinates of perception, thought, and action" (Rancière 1999, 87). His understanding of democracy is useful for grasping how aesthetic and political coordinates contributed to the reformulation of the criteria of evaluation of post-war Italian cities's ugliness.

The Neorealist stance in architecture should be related to the context of the process of city creation in a new Italy after the WWII damages. As Maristella Casciato underlines, "[i]t was in the south that the new national architectural language of Neorealism found its concrete expression" (Casciato 2000, 29). The contrast between south and north Italy is important for grasping the differences between Neorealist and Tendenza architecture. The context par excellence of Neorealist architecture is Rome, while the milieu par excellence of Tendenza is Milan. For instance, "[m]ilanese architectural culture had maintained a sense of the continuity of the modern movement and the rationalist European experience" (Casciato 2000, 31). This can explain Rogers's choice to give *Casabella*, which he directed since 1953, the subtitle "continuità".

BBPR's Torre Velasca is a thought-provoking case study for reflecting on Tendenza's aesthetic theory (Figs. 9, 10, 11). Given that it provoked several reactions and has been often characterized as ugly, its examination could illuminate Tendenza's stance towards ugliness. A common preoccupation of Tendenza and Team 10 was the concern for architecture's moral dimension. Despite the affinities between Team 10 and Ernesto Nathan Rogers's aesthetic views, which have been highlighted by Luca Molinari (Molinari 2016), Peter Smithson and Jaap Bakema criticized sharply BBPR's Torre Velasca, when it was presented at the 1959 CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) conference in Otterlo. Smithson argued that it

Fig. 9 BBPR's Torre Velasca featured on the cover of the issue 232 of *Casabella Continuità* published in October 1959

was aesthetically and ethically wrong and "a bad model to give because there are things that can be so easily distorted and become not only ethically wrong but aesthetically wrong" (Smithson cited in Newman 1961). He described it as a model with dangerous consequences and blamed Rogers for not being aware of his position in the society. Before this controversy, Torre Velasca had received an equally negative critique in France, in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, where it was regarded as an effect of the Italian appreciation for "ugliness, baroque inflammation, exaggeration, false originality, the strange, and the bizarre" (Charitonidou 2020). *Casabella* responded to the ironic title "Casabella... casus belli?" of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, which attacked BBPR's aesthetics, publishing a text with the equally caustic title "Si vis pacem demain... para bellum... aujourd'hui" (Charitonidou 2020).

The double stance of embodying cultural values without literally imitating past forms is emblematic of BBPR's posture. Rogers underlined that the significance of Torre Velasca's design strategy lied "in its intent to epitomize, culturally speaking—while avoiding repetition of the expressive language used in any of its buildings—the atmosphere of the city of Milan, its ineffable yet perceptible character." (Rogers 1997) This endeavour to transcribe through architectural composition a given culture's characteristics without imitating an existing visual language brings to mind Neorealist approach, which also aimed to invent an architectural language, based on cultural points of reference. A difference between Tendenza and Neorealist architecture is that the latter, in contrast with the former, developed an architectural language based on a set of mimetic devices. Neorealism's paradox lies in its double vocation to imitate and re-invent cultural identity's points of reference.

Tendenza and Neorealist architecture shared their interest in the intensification of architects' responsibility, the reestablishment of the relationship between reality and utopia and the critique of modernist homogenised and impersonal functionalism. Rogers invited architects to understand their "responsibilities towards tradition" (Rogers 1954), shaping an aesthetic view based on the understanding of tradition as "life-world". The notion of responsibility was also central for Quaroni, who believed that architects' role in society should embrace the task of urban design. In 1956, in his keynote lecture "The architect and town planning" at the CIAM International Summer School, held at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV), analysed how architects could be society's part. In 1979, he wrote: "Today, skilful architects console themselves by designing "their" architecture, and leave others the responsibility for a city". He maintained that it is in architects' responsibility to reflect on city's future and shape it. He believed that cities had become "too anonymous, too ugly, too inefficient", because architects did not try to change this situation, and left "political friends […] [and] city planning cousins" (Quaroni 1979) to decide about their future. For him, city's ugliness was a result of losing the sense of architects' responsibility for city's transformation.

Quaroni and Rogers aimed to reinvent the relationship between utopia and reality. Quaroni's approach is characterized by the belief in the potential of imaginary reality to revitalize urban design. In La torre di Babele, he expressed his belief "in the creative value of utopia—of an imaginary reality […] which […] holds the seeds for revitalizing a process like urban planning that has lost its capacity for energetic response." (Quaroni 1967) Quaroni's conception of utopia's creative force as imaginary reality, capable of revitalizing urban planning processes, brings to mind Rogers' understanding of "utopia of reality" as "teleological charge that projects the present into the possible future". Rogers underscored utopia's capacity "to transform reality in its deepest essence, in the moral and political, as well as in the didactic and pedagogical fields." (Rogers 1962, 1, 1965). The existential aspects of his perception of architecture's "experience" draw on Paci's phenomenological perspective, who associated the problem of "The Heart of the City", the 1951 CIAM's theme, to the necessity of a "synthesis of permanence and emergence" (Rogers 1958; Paci 1947, 1954, vii).

The critique of modernist functionalism and the reformulation of the models of evaluation of what ugly

Fig. 10 Torre Velasca (1950–8) by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (BBPR). Photograph taken by Marianna Charitonidou, 13 June 2018

architecture and city is are parameters of the same epistemological shift. For instance, both Quaroni and Rossi criticized modernist functionalism for being reductive, naïve and homogenizing. Quaroni blamed modern architects for reducing form-making to the response to functional problems and for understanding function in a simplistic way. He blamed them for neglecting the psychological and moral factors related to the way in which space is experienced. He also underlined that "function cannot be determined by means of mere square or cubic meters, since it is a compound of physical, special, psychological, moral factors." (Quaroni cited in van Bergeijk 2010, 123).

In *La torre di Babele*, Quaroni argued that "the modern city is really ugly" (Quaroni 1967), claiming that the lesson of historic cities, which was neglected in modern cities, is the well-integrated synthesis of functional, technological and aesthetic aspects. For him, the quality of architectural and urban artefacts depends on the extent to which the synthesis of these aspects is based on "an immediate, direct, good-natured relationship" (Quaroni 1967). Quaroni placed particular emphasis on the tension between historic and modern city, assimilating historic city to beautiful city and modern city to ugly city. He associated historic city's beauty with its "clear design […] [and] structure" (Quaroni 1967). For Quaroni, modern city was ugly because it was chaotic. *La torre di Babele* opens with the following phrases: "The architect tends by its nature, and by professional deformation, to the total

Fig. 11 Torre Velasca (1950–8) by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (BBPR). Photograph taken by Marianna Charitonidou, 13 June 2018

control of the city, as if it were a single building. But the mythical Tower of Babel, you know, never came to fruition." (Quaroni 1967).

Quaroni adopted Henry Miller's definition of confusion as "an order that you do not understand" (Miller 2015, 176) to explain the non-possibility of modern city's control with the non-capacity of architects to understand the order of post-war cities and their transformation and expansion. He related the inability to comprehend the order of contemporary city's urban fabric to his belief that modern city is ugly. As Rossi mentions, in his introduction of *La torre di Babele*, "Quaroni's theory […] revolves around the significance of the city and of architecture, and the fundamental question: what does it mean for us architects if the modern city is ugly?" Rossi also argued that Quaroni failed to recognise modern city's potential beauty, because he blamed modern architecture itself instead of speculation and ignorance. Rossi, instead, considered that modern city's ugliness is the result of "an absurd mechanism which operates on several different levels" (Rossi 1967; O'Regan and Rossi 1983).

Quaroni's aesthetic approach could be explained drawing a distinction between architects' disinterested view vis-à-vis beautiful architectural and urban artefacts and architects' engaged view vis-à-vis ugly architectural and urban artefacts. To clarify what I mean, I would claim that in the case of the beautiful, the relationship between object and subject is of a different order than that in the case of the ugly. The spectator of beautiful objects is disinterested, in contrast with that of ugly objects. When a viewer is confronted with ugly objects a desire to intervene emerges. The subject cannot be disinterested any more. Such an interpretation can help us explain post-war Italian architects' engagement vis-à-vis the re-invention of conceptual tools seeking to reshape the ugly aspects of urban and suburban formations. The belief that the problem of urban expansion should be part of architects' task became a common demand of different post-war Italian approaches.

The spectator became engaged vis-à-vis post-war Italian cities' reality.

In contrast with Karl Rosenkranz's thesis that ugliness is the active negation of beauty (Rosenkranz 2015). Mark Cousins maintains that the ugly cannot be thought of as the opposite of the beautiful and defines ugly "as a matter of place" and the ugly object as "an object which is experienced both as being there and as something that should not be there" (Cousins 1994, 93, 1995). This sense of not belonging to one's place could be related to Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of Neorealism as a profound stage of confusion that had led to the loss of feeling of belief in this world (Deleuze 1989). WW II underpinned divergent taxonomies, leading to a post-war era characterized by situations in which we are faced with spaces we no longer know how to describe, to which we longer know how to react. This stage of confusion, according to Deleuze, is not something negative, but constituted an opportunity to invent new signs in cinema (Deleuze 1989). This could be valuable for architecture too. Deleuze's understanding of confusion could be compared to Quaroni's conception of post-war Italian city's confusion. Even if Deleuze is affirmative, while Quaroni is negative towards confusion, both share the conviction that such a confusion makes necessary the invention of new modes of relating creative processes with reality. Tafuri described Quaroni's compositional method as "poetic of non-fabulation" (Tafuri 1975, 17). This distinction between poetic of fabulation and poetic of non-fabulation could help us grasp the perceptual mechanisms of Quaroni's design processes.

Neorealist approach constitutes an endeavour to conceive ugliness as a path to the real putting forward the reality of post-war Italian city. Neorealism's intention to recuperate the immediacy of reality instrumentalized and aestheticized urban ugliness. Such a point of view vis-à-vis the connection between ugliness and reality is apparent in post-war Italian Neorealist Cinema, as in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945) and Vittorio de Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948). André Bazin, a major theorist of Neorealism in cinema, highlighted the opposition between "aesthetic refinement and a certain crudeness, a certain instant effectiveness of a realism which is satisfied just to present reality" (Bazin 1971, 25; Charitonidou 2022d, 2022a). He related this conflict between aesthetic refinement and crudeness to the enlightening power of reality. This crudeness to which he refers could be associated with ugliness. The attachment of neorealism to the aesthetic of ugliness has been also highlighted by Bruno Reichlin, who shed light on the relation of neorealism to "the propensity for an aesthetic of the ugly." (Reichlin 2001, 83).

The endeavour of transforming ugly features of the urban landscape into architectural instruments of social and moral engagement was at the heart of Neorealist approach. In the context of post-war Italy, architects often aimed to transform ugly elements into devices of reflection about how one's aesthetic criteria interferes with the meaning they give to reality. Tiburtino district, designed by Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi, is often interpreted as a Neorealist expression in architecture. In this case, Quaroni and Ridolfi conceived the construction of social housing in a suburban neighbourhood of post-war Rome as a way to contribute to citizens' moral engagement towards life. This transformation of the norms according to which a city is judged as beautiful or ugly was paralleled with a shift from aesthetic criteria to politic, ethic, moral, social and civic criteria. The moral implications of aesthetic evaluation are apparent in Aristotle's *Poetics*, where 'aischros' (ugly) has moral as well as aesthetic implications (Aristotle 1997, 62). Characteristic of this moral engagement linked to Tiburtino district's spirit is Tafuri's description of it as a "manifesto of a state of mind, of an impelling need to communicate, to build a reality together with society and not simply for society." (Tafuri 1964, 94).

In terms of formal expression, neorealist architecture is characterized by a shift from a pre-established concept of compositional unity to one obtained by means of superposition and expressed through the aggregation of successive elements and the obsessive fragmentation of walls and fences, as in the case of Tiburtino district's (Fig. 12). Furthermore, it is characterized by the elaboration of formal discontinuities and the rediscovery of streets' value. It is also based on the surgical examination of the singularities of the visible world and everyday life. Quaroni wrote, in 1954, regarding Rome's character: "The baroque spirit is the spirit of Rome. It is a spontaneous generation, a creature of the site: autochthonous. It uses, even in the order of architecture, the vital disorder of the life of Rome" (Quaroni cited in Tafuri 1964, 190). This remark is penetrating for grasping Tiburtino district's intention to capture Rome's vitality (Fig. 13). Quaroni's appraisal of Rome's vital disorder is indicatory of Neorealism's transformation of city's ugly features into architectural instruments of social and moral engagement. The aesthetic project of Neorealist architecture lies in the double vocation to render architectural composition mundane and renounce the artificiality of the new. Quaroni wrote in 1957 regarding Tiburtino district's vitality and aestheticization of ugliness: "There was life, in any case, in the neighborhood. Beautiful or ugly, it lived as best it could." (Quaroni 1957, 24). The vitality is more important than anything else, for him, and, for this reason, he

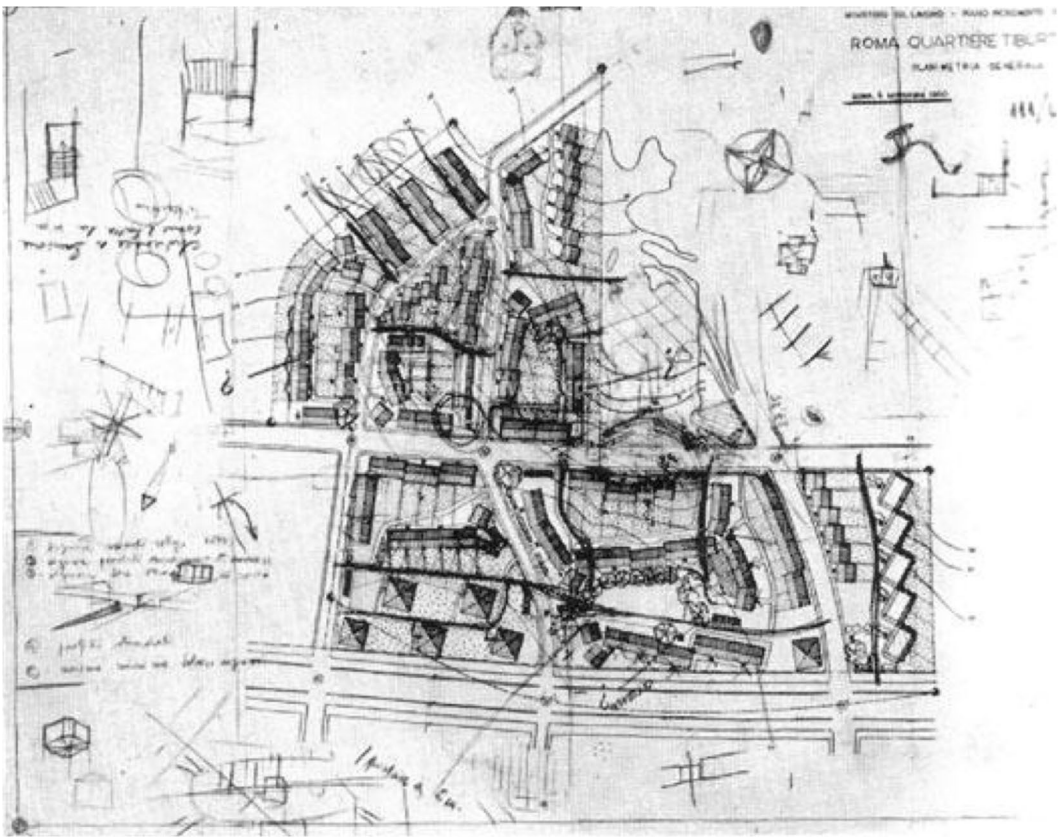


Fig. 12 Plan of the Tiburtino district, Rome, 1949–54. The main architects of the project were Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi . Other architects who worked on this project were Carlo Aymonino, Mario Fiorentino, Federico Gorio, Maurizio Lanza, Piero Maria Lugli, Giulio Rinaldi, Michele Valori, Carlo Aymonino, Carlo Chiarini, Sergio Lenci, Carlo Melograni, Gian Carlo Menichetti and Volfango Frankl. Credits: Associazione archivio storico Olivetti, Fondo Quaroni Ludovico, Serie Progetti e corrispondenza, fasc. 130

replaced the antagonism beautiful/ugly by that of vital/non-vital.

According to Kant, aesthetic judgments are judgments made about beauty. Kant focuses on the subject's experience of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure and conceives beauty, not as a property of objects, but as related to the subject's feeling of pleasure. He notes: "Fine art shows its superiority precisely in this, that it describes things beautifully that in nature we would dislike or find ugly." (Kant 1987, 180). Kant's conception of beauty as related to the subject's feeling of pleasure brings to mind Aldo Rossi's remark that architecture's "capacity to be transmitted and to give pleasure" is part of technics, that is to say architecture's "means and principles" (Rossi 1982, 127). The distinction that Zevi drew between beautiful and ugly architecture was based on the idea that " [b]eautiful architecture [is] […] architecture in which the interior space attracts us, elevates us and dominates us spiritually […] [while] ugly architecture would be that in which the interior space disgusts and repels us." (Zevi 1957).

Rossi noted, in 1977, in the introduction of the Portuguese edition of *L'Architettura della città*: "Topography, typology, and history come to be measures of the mutations of reality, together defining a system of architecture wherein gratuitous invention is impossible. Thus, they are opposed theoretically to the disorder of contemporary architecture." (Rossi 1977). As it becomes evident, Rossi understood typology as an instrument for measuring reality and resisting to contemporary architecture's disorder. His conception of typology as antidote to disorder and means to evaluate the real explain why Rossi believed that the "choice of typology at the beginning of the design process" was the means to avoid ugliness. He maintained that a "lot of architecture is ugly because it cannot be traced to a clear choice; without one, it is left deprived of meaning." (Rossi cited in Kirk 2005). For Rossi, "the individuality of the urban artifact was the moment of decision in which typological principles were applied to the real city" (Aureli 2008, 2009, 59). Rossi declared in 1974: "If the modern city is ugly, as Quaroni says, it

Fig. 13 Mario Ridolfi and others, Quartiere Ina-Casa Tiburtino a Roma. Lotto B, case con ballatoio, riproduzione fotografi ca. Credits: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Roma. Archivio del Moderno e del Contemporaneo, Fondo Ridolfi-Frankl-Malagricci, www.fondoridolfi.org

means that the models of reference have gradually worn out […] rationalism that arose from the Haussmannian solutions has been lost; the capitalist modern city has, in its instability, the inability to give itself a face" (Rossi 1974, 61). If we juxtapose the above thesis with Rossi's assertion a year before, in the catalogue of the XV Triennale di Milano devoted "Architettura razionale", where he declared that "there is no longer any ideological shield for ugly architecture" (Rossi 1973, 13), we would be confronted with the paradox of Rossi's declaration of the non-effectiveness of the very notion of rational architecture, just a year after his choice of The title "Architettura razionale" for the XV Triennale di Milano.

Rossi considered ugly the architectural artefacts that are not characterized by a clearly defined individuality and the architectural artefacts that were not formed according to precise typological choices. Pivotal for understanding what Rossi understood as clearly defined individuality is the notion of 'locus', which is distinct from the notion of context, and concerns the "relationship between a certain specific location and the buildings that are in it [and] is at once singular and universal" (Rossi 1982, 103). Rossi understood the city as the "locus of the collective memory" (Rossi 1982, 130). According to Rossi's theory of the city, the defining parameters of an architectural artefact are "the autonomous principles according to which it is founded and transmitted." (Rossi 1982, 130, 127). What is at the core of his conception of architectural and urban artefacts is his double understanding of them as individual and social works. Rossi was not critical of common architecture, given that his research […] [was] "focused on the whole city, and not just on authored architecture" (Aureli 2012). Rossi's interest in non-authored architecture is pivotal for understanding how his perspective appropriated in an affirmative way characteristics that in a different context could be treated as ugly.

Rossi's aesthetic view towards ugliness in *Architettura della città* (Rossi 1966; 1982) and *A Scientific Autobiography* are distinct (Rossi 1981). In the approach, he developed in Architettura della città, he identified of ugly architecture with architecture that does not derive from a clear choice of typology and understood disorder as necessarily negative. He adopted as criterion for judging if architecture is ugly or not the extent to which form-making was based on clear choices of typologies. Progressively, his approach incorporated an elective affirmation vis-à-vis disorder. In contrast with his disapproval of disorder in *Architettura della città* (Rossi 1966; Rossi 1982) in *A Scientific Autobiography*, Rossi is more positive towards disorder (Rossi 1981). He drew a distinction between arbitrary and non-arbitrary disorder, aiming to understand the space of encounter between order and disorder: "I felt that the disorder of things, if limited and somehow honest might best correspond to our state of mind. But I detested the arbitrary disorder that is an indifference to order, a kind of moral absurdness, complacent well-being forgetfulness" (Rossi 1981, 83).

Rossi distinguished two types of disorder: one that derives from honesty and one that comes from indifference and moral absurdness. For Rossi, disorder that is provoked by the desire of honesty was appropriate, in contrast with disorder that is produced due to the lack of moral engagement. Rossi explained his interest in the boundary between order and disorder as follows: "The union of different techniques resulting in a sort of realization-confusion has always impressed me. It has to do with the boundary between order and disorder; and the boundary, the wall, is a fact of mathematics and masonry. Thus, the boundary or wall between city and non-city establishes two different orders." (Rossi 1981, 50). Rossi associated the schism order/disorder to the distinction urban/non-urban, while Zevi related the question of whether a building is beautiful or ugly to the distinction

architecture/non-architecture. The distinction architecture/non-architecture and city/non-city are at the centre of the debate around ugliness within the post-war Italian context.

Analogy's relationship with a de-familiarization process is an important aspect of Rossi's approach towards ugliness. His growing interest in the notion of analogy corresponds to his distancing from any literal or mimetic correspondence. Rossi employed the term "analogy" to describe the "unforeseen results" of the encounter with architectural artefacts that intensify semantic ambiguity. In "An Analogical Architecture", Rossi adopted Carl Jung's definition of analogical thought as "sensed yet unreal, […] archaic, unexpressed, and practically inexpressible in words" (Rossi 1976a, Rossi cited in Charitonidou 2020, 239). In "The Analogous City", he referred to the importance of the dialectics of the concrete and underscored the "capacity of the imagination born from the concrete" (Rossi 1976b, 6). He believed that the concrete is capable of activating imagination. If we adopt the view that the spectator towards beautiful objects is disinterested, while the spectator towards ugly objects is engaged, we could assume that ugly objects activate imagination. Such a hypothesis shows that Rossi's dialectics of the concrete and the aestheticization of post-war Italian cities' ugliness are close. Kant's claim that "ugliness is constituted by the free imagination being unrestrained by the understanding's need for order" (Kuplen 2013, 275) could be associated with Rossi's interest in this kind of disorder described above. Rossi's belief in the creative force of the concrete could be associated with Kant's conviction that "ugliness pushes the freedom of the imagination to a high degree" imagination to a high degre (Kuplen 2013, 275). Both positions interpret ugliness as a powerful source of creativity. Kant's connection of free imagination with ugliness and Rossi's belief in the capacity of the concrete to activate imagination are useful for understanding ugliness' imaginative potential.

In "The Analogous City", Rossi referred to *Nuova Società*'s issue dedicated to the question of "how beautiful the city is" in order to argue that "beauty is useful" (Vertone 1976, 18). *Nuova Società*'s issue devoted to question of "how ugly the city is", opened with Carlo Aymonino's paradoxical assertion that " [t]he beauty of the city is that it was always ugly" (Aymonino 1979, 25). The link between beauty and use brings to mind Henri Lefebvre's remark regarding Bruno Zevi's adoption of use as aesthetic yardstick's primordial value in order to judge a space as "beautiful" or "ugly" (Lefebvre 1991, 128, 1974). Zevi rejected architecture's evaluation according to purely aesthetic criteria, questioning: "What, then, is architecture? And, perhaps equally important, what is non-architecture? Is it proper to identify architecture with a beautiful building and non-architecture with an ugly building? Is the distinction between architecture and non-architecture based on purely aesthetic criteria?" (Zevi 1957, 24, 1948). He believed that "the content of architecture is its social content" and gave primacy to the experience of interior space, defining architecture as "the way space is organized into meaningful form" (Zevi 1957, 49, 1948). Both Zevi and Rossi put into question the adoption of purely aesthetic or purely functional criteria and searched for the junction between use and aesthetic fulfilment. Zevi proposed a conception of use that intended to replace impersonal functionalism by an organic architecture placed at the service of democracy, while Rossi disapproved any ex nihilo aesthetic or functional models applied to new cities, and believed only in concrete opportunities, which could only be tested *hic et nunc* and emerge through understanding and comparing concrete problems.

When confronted with Torre Velasca, we are in face of a paradoxical parallel effect of estrangement and familiarization, which lies on the tension between 'continuità' and 'preesistenze ambientali' and can be explained through Paci's view of the relationship between past and present: "It is while questioning the past (but not by becoming the past) that I understand the present and the interest of the present for its own transformation" (Paci 1972, 24). Similarly, what is at stake in Aldo Rossi's concept of analogy is a process of de-familiarization, which provokes an intensification of semantic ambiguity. Quaroni's replacement of beautiful/ugly by vital/non-vital shows that his concepts of the 'città meravigliosa' and the 'qualità diffusa' cannot be understood without untying their existential load, which as in Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Aldo Rossi's case, moralizes ugliness. This appropriation of estrangement and de-familiarization and their existential implications justify Neorealism and Tendenza's aestheticization of post-war Italian cities' ugliness.

Towards a conclusion: Around the cross-fertilisation of the debates around ugliness in architecture and urbanism

Transnational historical research focuses on how connections function as central forces for historical processes. The "transnationalization" of historical discourse is based on the effort to understand the impact of cross-border relations on the transformation of certain concepts and ideas in each of the national contexts under study (Charitonidou 2016). The transnational approach in social sciences aims to take into consideration the historical dimension when analysing how international exchanges of ideas and values evolve.

Insightful for comparing Boyd's 'Featurism' with the "Townscape movement" is Macarthur's remark claiming

that "Hastings would accept modernist featurism alongside meretricious historicism and vernacular mis-appropriations of style, on the grounds that buildings of very varied architectural quality could be composed by an architectural eye at an urban level" (Macarthur 2019, 56; Stead et al 2021). On the one hand, the "Townscape movement" related ugliness to the difficulty to distinguish urban features of the town and those of the countryside. On the other hand, Boyd related ugliness to the lack of capacity to eliminate what he called "the neuter type". More specifically, Boyd wrote in *The Australian Ugliness*: "The solution then is to recognise that there is an appropriate time and place for both the technology of space-enclosure and the architecture of expression, and to work to eliminate the neuter type: neither scientific nor artistic" (Boyd 1960, 188, 1963a, 1968, 1971).

Of great importance for better grasping the cross-cultural exchanges between Australia and the UK regarding the concept of ugliness in architecture and urban design is the article entitled "The Sad End of New Brutalism" authored by Robin Boyd. Brutalist ethic functioned as an antidote against architecture and city's ugliness (Boyd 1967). Moreover, Boyd in *The Australian Ugliness*, referred to New Brutalism (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971). The exchanges between the UK and Australia, as far as the conception of ugliness is concerned, are more evident given that Robin Boyd wrote several articles for *The Architectural Review* (Boyd 1951, 1952, 1956, 1958, 1963b, 1967) and referred to Ian Nairn's work in *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd 1960, 1963a, 1968, 1971). In parallel, the exchanges between Italy and the UK played an important role for the evolution of the debates around ugliness in architecture and urbanism. Another case that is enlightening regarding the debates between the Italian and British architectural theorists is the controversy between Reyner Banham, who was enthusiastically defending Alison and Peter Smithson's aesthetic view, in 1959, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers's approach. More specifically, Banham attacked Rogers's approach using the label "Neoliberty" (Banham 1959).

Romaldo Giurgola played an important role in the exchanges between Italy and Australia, but also in the cross-fertilisation between the United States of America and Australia (Giurgola 1965, 1973, 1980). Before migrating to Australia, he was a professor at Cornell University and University of Pennsylvania, and the chair of the Architecture Department of Columbia University. He was appointed as assistant professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1954, where he taught "Architectural Theory" (Williamson 2015) until 1966, when he joined Columbia University's Architecture Department. The reason for his migration to Australia was his winning entry to international competition for the landmark Australian Parliament House in Canberra in 1980. After winning the competition, Giurgola resettled in Australia in 1980. When Scott Brown resettled in Philadelphia, Giurgola was teaching there. Giurgola contributed along with Piero Sartogo, Costantino Dardi, Antoine Grumbach, James Stirling, Paolo Portoghesi, Robert Venturi, Colin Rowe, Michael Graves, Robert Krier, Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier to the exhibition "Roma Interrotta" held in 1978 (Sartogo 2014, Sartogo and Cerruti 1978).

Aldo Rossi's proposal for a tower in Melbourne in 1979 (Fig. 14), which is known as the Tower of Memories and has been described as a landmark for Melbourne, is a case that could serve for exploring whether there is any common ground between Australian Featurism, as Boyd understood it, and Rossi's understanding of typology and the analogous city. The Tower o Memories by Rossi is an unsuccessful competition entry for a landmark building in Melbourne. Rossi's proposal for this tower in Melbourne could be interpreted as a typical expression of "international culture" aiming to promote

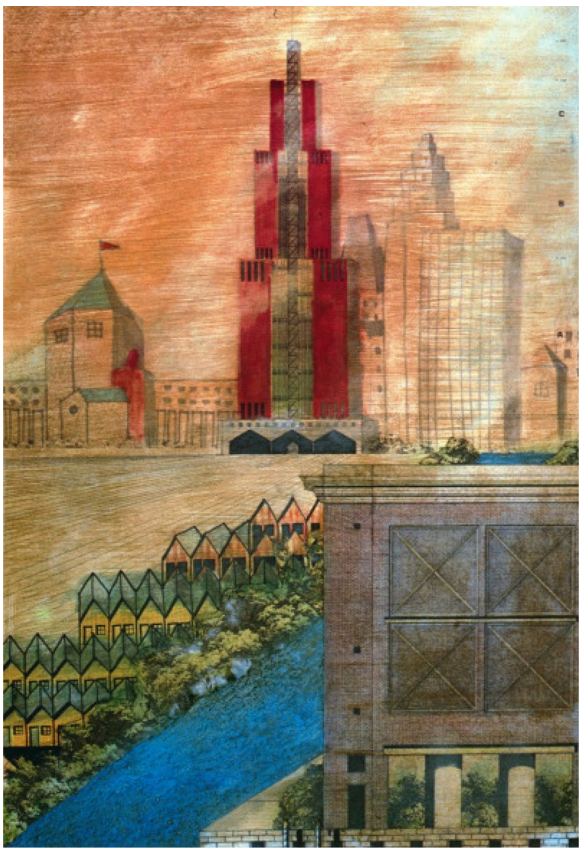


Fig. 14 Aldo Rossi, The Tower of Memories, A Landmark for Melbourne, Australia, 1979. Credits: Fondazione Aldo Rossi, Milan

local aspirations. As an example of "made in Italy" within the Australian context (Micheli and Macarthur 2018), it could be conceived as an attempt to assert a social position of architecture, challenging the tension between local and global discourse.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to the Architectural Archives of University of Pennsylvania for the authorization to use Fig. 4, 5 and 6. I am thankful to Robin Boyd Foundation for the authorization to use Fig. 2 and to Associazione archivio storico Olivetti and Accademia Nazionale di San Luca for the authorization to use Fig. 12 and Fig. 13 respectively. I would also like to thank the Fondazione Aldo Rossi for the authorization to use Fig. 14. The reflections developed in this article are related to the postdoctoral project "The Travelling Architect's Eye: Photography and Automobile Vision" that I conducted at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich, the seminar "The City Represented: The View from the Car" that I taught at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich, and the exhibition The View from the Car: Autopia as a New Perceptual Regime that I curated at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Tom Avermaete for our insightful exchanges in the framework of the aforementioned postdoctoral project and Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen for our great collaboration for the preparation of the aforementioned exhibition. Finally, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of their insightful comments. I would like to thank ETH Zurich, ETH Zurich Foundation and Stavros Niarchos Foundation for supporting my project entitled "The Travelling Architect's Eye: Photography and the Automobile Vision", the anonymous reviewers, and the Editor-in-Chief of *City, Territory and Architecture* Prof. Dr. Giovanni Maciocco for their enriching comments. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Jean-Louis Cohen for his stimulating feedback while working on this article, and to Dr. David Kroll and Dr. James Curry for the organisation of the 38th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand (SAHANZ) (10-13 November 2021), where I was invited to present a paper related to the reflections developed on this article. Many thanks also go to the very motivated students of the seminar "The City Represented: The View from the Car as a New Perceptual Regime" that I taught at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich during the spring semester 2021 for our insightful exchanges.

Authors' contributions
The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding
Open access funding provided by Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich.

Availability of data and materials
Not applicable.

Declarations

Competing interests
No competing interests.

Author details
[1]Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (GTA), Department of Architecture, ETH Zürich, Stefano-Franscini-Platz 5, 8093 Zurich, Switzerland. [2]School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens, 42 Patission Street, 106 82, Athens, Greece. [3]Faculty of Art Theory and History, Athens School of Fine Arts, 42 Patission Street, 106 82, Athens, Greece.

Received: 17 September 2021 Accepted: 22 February 2022
Published online: 16 June 2022

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Publisher's Note

Dr. Ing. Marianna Charitonidou is architect Engineer, Urban Planner, and historian & theorist of architecture and urbanism. She is a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Art Theory and History of Athens School of Fine arts, where she is conducting the postdoctoral research project "Constantinos A. Doxiadis and Adriano Olivetti's Postwar Reconstruction Agendas in Greece and in Italy: Centralising and Decentralising Political Apparatus". She conducted the postdoctoral project https://www.gta.arch.ethz.ch/staff/marianna-charitonidou/research and the postdoctoral project "Architecture between Nature and Archaeology: A Transnational and Altermodern Investigation of the Image of Greece" at the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens. Moreover, she curated the exhibition "The View from the Car: Autopia as a New Perceptual Regime" at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich (https://viewfromcarexhibition.gta.arch.ethz.ch). In September 2018 she was awarded a Doctoral Degree all'unanimità from the National Technical University of Athens for her PhD dissertation "The Relationship between Interpretation and Elaboration of Architectural Form: Investigating the Mutations of Architecture's Scope" (jury: Jean- Louis Cohen, Bernard Tschumi, George Parmenidis, Pippo Ciorra, Constantinos Moraitis, Kostas Tsiambaos, Panayotis Tournikiotis), which she is currently editing into two books. In her PhD dissertation she examined the mutations of the modes of representation in contemporary architecture in relation to the transformation of the status of the addressee of architecture. Apart from her PhD Degree, she also holds an MPhil Degree in History and Theory of Architecture and Urbanism (Inter-Departmental Postgraduate Program "Design, Space, Culture") from the School of Architectural Engineering of the National Technical University of Athens (2013) (MPhil Dissertation Project: "From Semiology to Deconstruction: Metaphysics and Subject"), an MSc Degree in Sustainable Environmental Design from the Architectural Association in London (2011), and a Master Degree in Architectural Engineering from the Department of Architectural Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2010). She has more than 85 scientific publications focused on architecture and urban planning, and has taught in various schools in Europe – especially in Zurich, Paris and Greece. She is a licensed architect engineer since 2010 and the founder and principal of THINK THROUGH DESIGN architectural and urban design studio. Website: https://charitonidou.com. Email: m.charitonidou@icloud.com.