Domus n. 685, Luglio/Agosto 1987, Editoriale

LE FACCIATE

Quella di produrre «facciate» non è stata certamente una delle maggiori aspirazioni del movimento moderno, anzi, per tanti anni si è quasi evitato di parlarne forse per l'imbarazzo prodotto da un termine così riduttivo e convenzionale. Ma passando e ripassando per alcune strade del centro storico della mia città, quelle che hanno avuto la fortuna di non essere state sfigurate dalle ricostruzioni parziali (quasi sempre un insuccesso, quando non decisamente un disastro come nel caso degli arretramenti discontinuo imposti dal Piano Regolatore) ho finito per comprendere la straordinaria importanza delle facciate, dei fronti, di quelle case allineate senza soluzione di continuità.

Sul piano teorico tutto ciò può sembrare una pura banalità. Infatti una buona architettura è proprio quella che sa mettersi nella migliore relazione con il proprio contesto. Ma le nostre città, e Milano in particolar modo, hanno visto e vedono ben poca buona architettura in questo senso dal dopoguerra, e paradossalmente se ne vede sempre meno (nonostante tutto il dibattere e pubblicare che proprio a Milano si fa).

Secondo un sentimento diffuso, certamente avvalorato dalla esperienza diretta, la bellezza delle città sarebbe un valore difficilmente incrementabile,

minacciato anzi e continuamente eroso dalle ricostruzioni moderne. Effettivamente non solo le sfortunate ricostruzioni, ma anche gli interi quartieri concepiti nel dopoguerra come palestre della nuova architettura, hanno miseramente deluso le aspettative contribuendo al formarsi di questa istintiva diffidenza verso ogni nuovo intervento sul tessuto urbano.

Per decenni si sono costruiti inqualificabili condomini e sgangherati quartieri usando vacui pretesti compositivi come l'esibizione dello scheletro strutturale piuttosto che i ritmi e le alternanze astratte dei tamponamenti, ignorando i caratteri il tessuto e le tipologie di un determinato quartiere. Ignorando quindi la straordinaria lezione della modesta architettura delle vecchie strade del centro storico. Essa ci parla attraverso le sue limpide facciate che sono il volto della città e dei suoi abitanti. Non crosta superficiale, quindi, ma faccia che altra verso finestre e androni affaccia gli abitanti sulla strada e sulla città, mentre di ritorno lascia filtrare città e strada nello spazio domestico. Un impietoso bilancio dei danni inflitti alla nostra città negli ultimi quarant'anni (certamente superiori a quelli delle distruzioni belliche) dovrebbe suggerirci un più attento studio della sua peculiare cultura architettonica.

MARIO BELLINI

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF ARCHITECTURE INTERIORS DESIGN ART

IBA, MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE DI ARCHITETTURA: UN BILANCIO CRITICO DI SETTE ANNI DI LAVORO SULLA CITTÀ

CITTÀ E UTOPIA: UN'INTERVISTA A WOLF JOBST SIEDLER

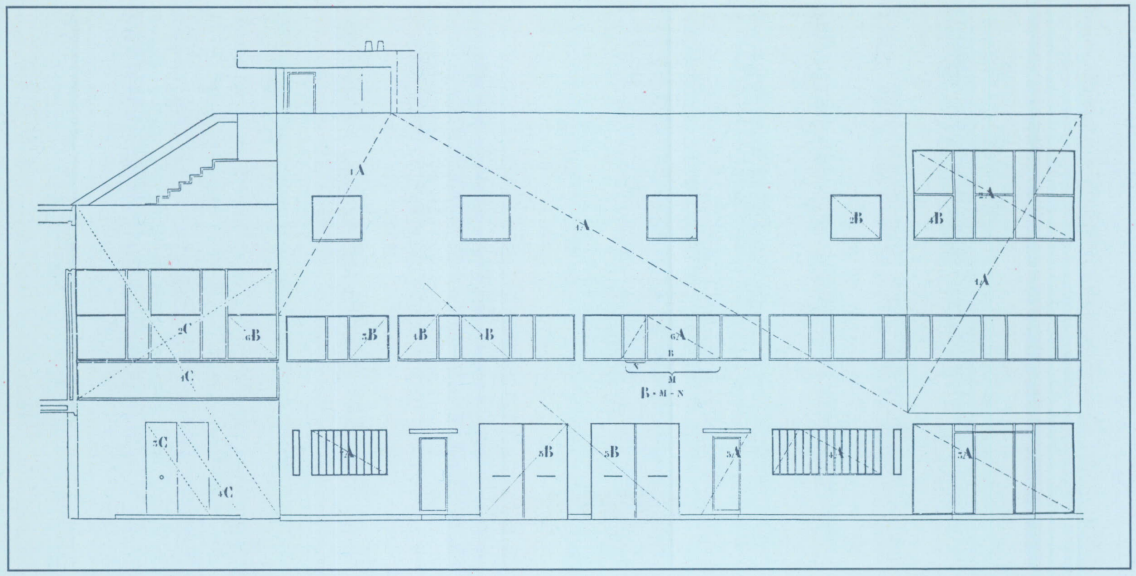
GLI INTERRUTTORI

LE LAMPADE DI INGO MAURER: PUNTO, LINEA, FORZA E LUCE

ITINERARIO: IBA E BERLINO

JAMES STIRLING, AMPLIAMENTO DELLA TATE GALLERY, LONDRA

RENZO PIANO, MUSEO PER LA MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON



FACADES

To produce «facades» has certainly not been one of the modern movement's greatest aspirations. Indeed, many of its exponents have almost shunned the subject, perhaps through embarrassment by such a reductive and conventional term. But after years of walking through some of the streets in Milan's historic centre, the ones fortune enough not to have been disfigured by partial reconstruction (almost always unsuccessful when not a downright disaster, as in the case of the discontinuous recesses imposed by the Master Plan), I have come to appreciate the extraordinary importance of the facades, or fronts, of those uninterrupted lines of houses.

Theoretically, all that may sound quite banal. In fact, architecture is good when it relates in the best possible way to its context. But our cities, and Milan in particular, have seen very little good architecture of this kind since the war; and paradoxically they are seeing less and less of it, despite all the debating and publishing that goes on precisely in Milan.

It is widely believed, and certainly on the strength of direct experience, that the beauty of cities is a value difficult to augment and indeed threatened, and continually eroded, by «modern» reconstructions. Effectively, not only the unfortunate reconstructions, but even whole districts conceived since the war as gymnasiums of new architecture, have been dismally disappointing. And they have engendered an instinctive mistrust of any new interference with our urban fabric.

For decades unspeakable blocks of flats and ramshackle estates have been built, upon such vacuous compositive pretexts as the display of structural skeletons rather than the rhythms and abstract alternations of infill panels, ignoring the characteristics, fabric and typologies of a given area. Ignoring, therefore, the extraordinary lesson taught by the modest architecture of our historic centres. That modest architecture speaks to us through its limpid facades, the face of the city and its inhabitants. Not a superficial crust, but a face which, through its windows and entrance halls, looks at the inhabitants on their streets and city, whilst in return letting the city and street filter into domestic space.

A pitiless summing-up of the damage inflicted on our city over the past forty years – certainly worse than that caused by the war – ought to suggest a more attentive study of its peculiar architecture culture.

DOMUS N.685 - JULY/AUGUST 1987

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