HISTORICIZATIONS OF THE TRANSITORY:

Architecture as a Sign of Modernity

Transparency and the Muse Within:

3 Works by Franco Albini with Caterina Marcenaro

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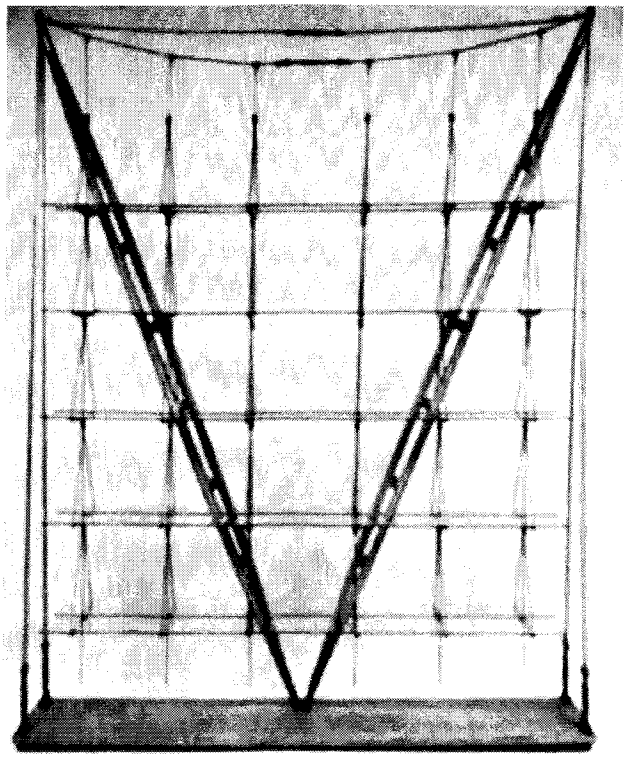


figure 1

A sometimes nihilistic, sometimes realistic wind blows through present-day architecture, sweeping away the gestures, the words, and the images that the architecture generated during the crisis climate of the 1950s could still posit. That moment was underpinned by the pathos of insecurity, of the horrors of war, and of the contradictions of social life, and was accordingly cushioned by an architecture that promised an optimistic alternative.[1]

—Ignasi de Sola-Morales

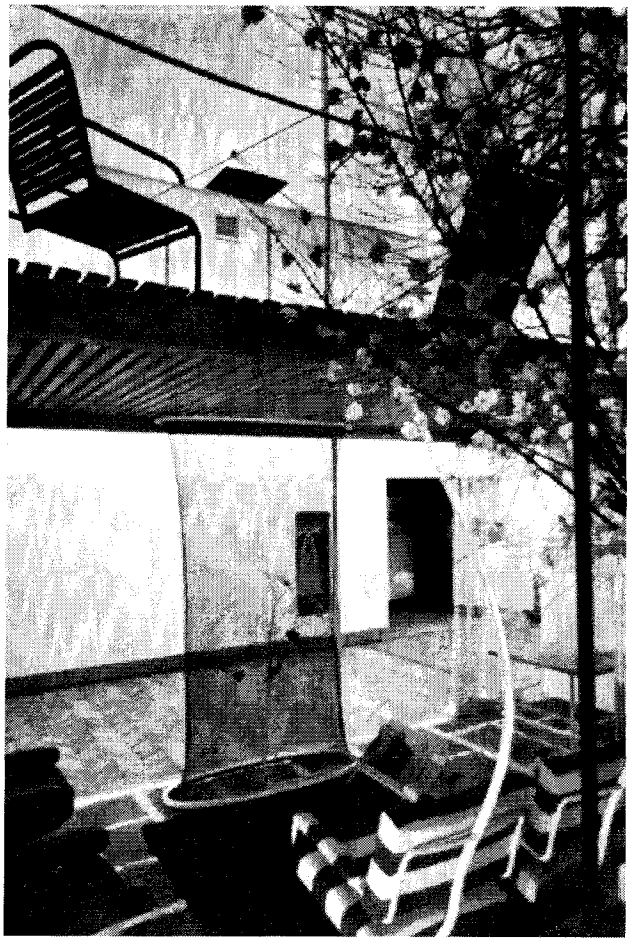


figure 2

If any significance is left to the project in this world, it is linked to the loss of the certainties of the plan, to the assumption of chance, impermanence, and spontaneity; which means of openness and risk.[2]

—Gianni Vattimo

There remains a body of modern design produced in the immediate post war period in Italy that has neither risen to cult status, nor been discarded for mute functionalism as perceived by a generation with virtual poststructuralist sensibilities. This paper examines the phe-

nomenal work of Franco Albini, an overlooked member of the Italian rationalists whose buildings, furniture and interiors parallel those of Scarpa, Gardella, Quaroni, Ponti, de Carlo, Ridolfi, Michelucci, and Rogers, when his architecture reached maturity in the late 1940s through 1960s. This research is part of a larger project to reevaluate the successes and failures of sites and buildings in post-war Italy that to date have been viewed only disparately and at a distance. They are not easily compressed into a list of principles or canonical images, categories of authority or style, yet provide many examples rich in modern expression, technology and materiality, and effectively represent a democratic architecture despite their local formal legacy. Italian self-criticism of the time by architects faced with ideological and professional crises failed to recognize their emerging pluralism over uniformity as representing desirable growth. These Italian architects had been shaped by ideology during fascism, albeit with polemic debate over the relationship between form and symbol. They willfully appropriated advancements in technology to craft surfaces and produced publications establishing theoretical bases for their arguments and ideas. When ideologies were eroded and those architects were free to change, as pressures regarding fascist symbolism mounted, they capitalized on widely diverse inspiration and ample opportunity during the post-war reconstruction, a period defined by fertile political questioning and cultural regeneration.

Several scholars have shed light on the importance of work produced at this time indicating the influence of realized constructions over theoretical or academic criticism. In 1954, G. E. Kidder Smith published ***L'Italia Costruisce*** (Italy Builds) illustrating the eclectic diversity of design emerging across the country and unique to Italy. He categorized motives for what he witnessed as resulting from "feverish rebuilding; intellectual depth of leading architects; felicitous mixture of new architecture with old;" knowledge of building types; freshness of new work with freedom from clichés and dogma; the interactions of fashion, cinema, painting, sculpture, and all areas of design; masonry construction and journal venues for communication of new ideas.[3] During the last decade, renewed consideration of Italian architecture of the reconstruction years has come from outside Italy and revived interest in complex coincident tendencies known as *neorealism, organicism,* and *rationalism.*

A critical analysis of the debates concerning design theory and the constituent elements of architectural production in Italy between 1943 and 1968 reveals an architectural culture of unusual sophistication and subtlety. . . . it is possible to recognize that what was perceived by many Italians as a record of failures and frustrations was really one of the first sustained postwar challenges to the hegemony of Modernist models.[4]

—Doordan

The crisis of values following WWII, which we are analyzing here, was responsible for the rejection of aesthetic systems based on the 19th century idealist search for beauty. The visual was supplanted by total, synthetic, productive perception. With the overthrow of general principles, the aesthetic was transformed from the imitation of a model to the subjective production of elementary perceptual experiences, capable of generating signification through emotion. . . .Architecture acquired absolute freedom of perceptual experimentation, evidenced not only by the abandonment of certain codified stylemes of the modern tradition, but in the opening toward highly experimental position in the matter of forms, materials, and spaces.[5]

—de Sola'-Morales

In particular, the work of Franco Albini embodies this expressive pluralism with a language of transparency all his own yet belonging to the Italian tendenza.[6] Variations among three museum projects in Genoa, realized within a ten-year span and within existing historic buildings to accommodate existing artifacts, offer particularly revealing insight into his diverse body of work. In depth investigation requires outlining those conditions of fascist and post-war Italy for political, social and cultural implications to the contexts within which Albini's work is situated. Thorough analysis of the era and specificities of differing sites is beyond the scope of this paper, yet mention of three conditions helps to frame the cultural circumstances in which Albini worked. First, cinematic neorealism had a powerful impact on architectural production, including film sets located in new and old urban spaces. Secondly, The rise of the Christian Democratic party, kept on its toes by persistent opposition from a coalition of left leaning tendencies, supported primarily urban planning and housing programs over cultural institutions, and was less focused on a search for new expression than was the previous regime. Finally, after the war there is renewed access to and influences from architecture beyond the Italian borders, especially the US, CIAM and northern European progressive experiments. Still, Italian characteristics of closed façades and urban mass, masonry construction, and vernacular building methods continued to define much of the new work.

Albini began practicing architecture when he graduated from the Milan Politechnic in 1929 and partnered with Giancarlo Palanti. As a rationalist architect, but neither a member of the active Gruppo 7 nor particularly political, Albini's work in the 1930s consisted of competitions, installations, exhibition interiors, furniture, and housing projects. His roots were firmly planted in northern rationalism, where he was heavily influenced by Edoardo Persico, the mythic figure who promoted progressive modern form and principles among the resistance while consistently denying fascism. Albini was a prolific designer. Leading up to and during the war, he produced corpo-

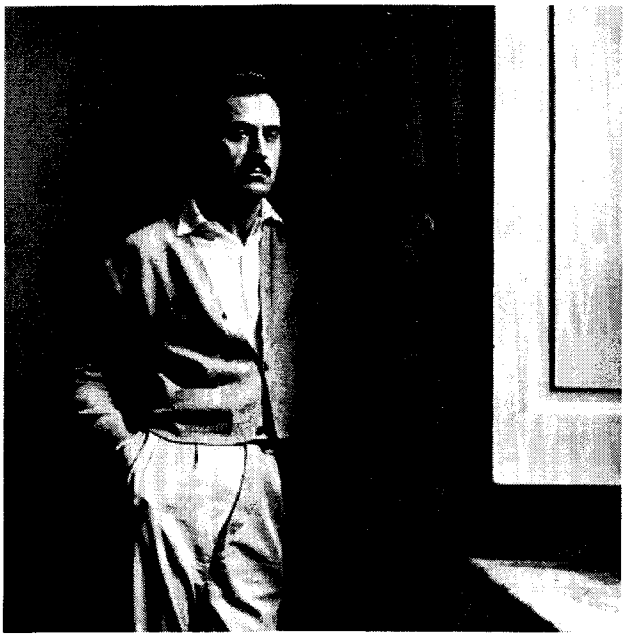


figure 3 - Franco Albini

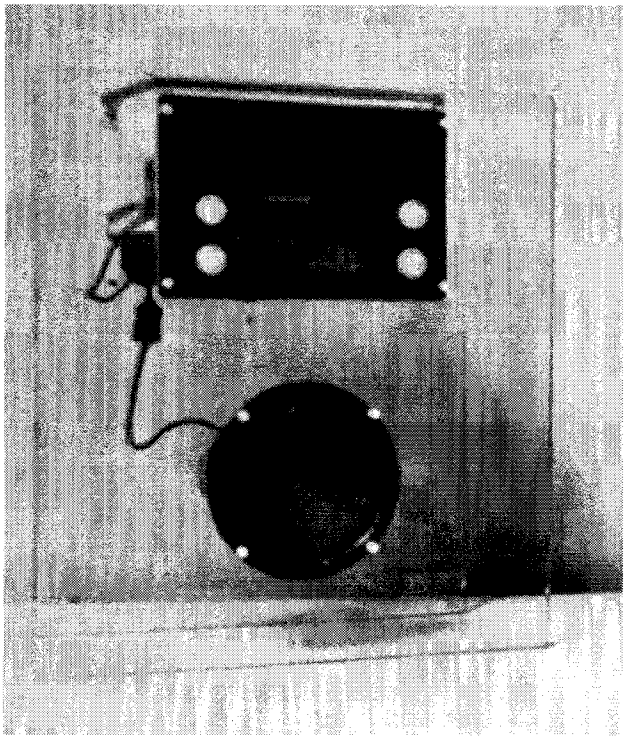


figure 4 - radio cabinet 1938-40

rate, commercial, and residential interiors at the same time he was installing theoretically-informed exhibition spaces, wherein significant cross-fertilization is apparent. He taught under Samona' at the University Institute of Architecture of Venice from 1949-64 and at the Faculty of Architecture in Turin from 1954-55.[7] His talents emerged when granted important public commissions for cultural institutions beginning in 1949, most produced with Franca Helg and his Milan office, that define his unique vision and from which the following observations about his work can be made:

1. The persistence of progressive modern language of rationalist transparency represents continuity during a pluralist period when that which represented pre-war/fascist tendencies was questioned and often shunned.
2. The careful negotiation of radical form and modern materials within historic structures. Tectonic and material investigations and realized spaces exhibit a confidence in his architectural expression as witnessed by highly developed details and diagrammatic clarity with site specific variation among projects.
3. Internalized transparency departs from Miesian exterior/interior phenomena to develop interior/interior literal and phenomenal spatial relations that maintain urban mass and closure between public and private zones but exploit weightlessness, transparency of displays, and visual connectivity within.

Albini's work offers an alternative paradigm to traditional models of modern transparency. Other strategies such as Albini's are welcome today after several decades of criticism of Bauhaus material transparency concerning its inability to secure privacy, contain artifacts, move beyond the status of the cult object, become monumental or escape nihilist or elitist expression.[8] While his furniture and interiors have been recognized as minor architecture, taken together with his sublime architectural interventions for historic revitalizations, the compete body of work constitutes relational practices beyond doctrinaire formalism and abstract functionalism by engaging existing sites phenomenally and without nostalgia. Tafuri addressed these achievements of museology as high points that unleashed repression during this period, and specifically credited Albini's contribution to the renewal of museum design whose themes ranged "from the 'civil' role of form to the encounter between memory and innovation."[9] In addition to but beyond functionalist restraint and diagrammatic clarity, it is the complete realization in situ of Albini's museum work that deserves recognition and requires careful study. An inside examination of three museums he completed in Genoa and the apartment he designed for his patron will serve to illustrate the three aforementioned principles of rationalist thinking beyond style allowing for pluralist responses to historic monuments and sublime use of interior phenomenal transparency.

PALAZZO BIANCO

Following Allied bombing of Genoa in 1942, three badly damaged

figure 5

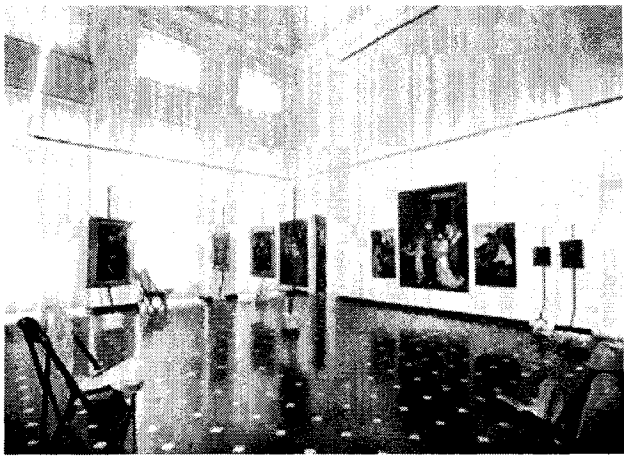


figure 6

monuments provided Albini with opportunities for reconstruction. They included San Agostino church and cloisters in the medieval core of the Sarzano neighborhood and the Palazzos Bianco and Rosso along the Renaissance Strada Nuova.[10] The two Palazzi given to the city by the Duchessa di Galliera during the 19th century had already held collections acquired through her endowment. In 1949 another protagonist of this story, Caterina Marcenaro, became the *soprintendente delle beni culturale,* (head of municipal cultural) charging her with control over all the city's cultural patrimony and museums. Marcenaro was anxious to overturn the deeds of her patronizing mentor and predecessor in the job, Orlando Grossi, who although central to Genoa's Fascist political scene, was not punished after the war due to his heroic efforts to protect the artistic wealth of the city.[11] It required great chutzpah from the new superintendent to initiate and permit radical modern interventions as the revitalization of revered historic artifacts. It is unclear how Marcenaro became acquainted with Albini, but during her 21-year reign as culture czar, she commissioned him to produce four unprecedented modern galleries within historic monuments during a time when resources were extremely scarce.[12] While Albini worked throughout his career with other architects, his work for Marcenaro is perhaps his most significant collaboration, yet their relationship is least understood. Little is known about their interaction, but some is written and much more is locally mythologized regarding the intensity and tension between them.[13] In addition to managing the Palazzo Rosso to become a hybrid period and modern gallery, Albini also designed Marcenaro's apartment in the reconstructed penthouse or "attico" of the 16th century palazzo. Since the existing plan of Albini's palazzi galleries left little freedom to the architect, the domestic space for the unmarried superintendent provides further insight into his strategies of spatial layering and occupying the relational void.

Each of the three museums commissioned by Marcenaro employs material and phenomenal contrasts to illustrate Albini's relational transparency. Palazzo Bianco, Albini's first Genoese commission, is also the first example of the gallery as abstract white cube. With uncanny freshness, restraint, and light he set a standard against which later museum installations by Scarpa, BBPR, and hosts of lesser known architects would be measured. Tafuri called it a "masterpiece of museological function and neutrality and a patient reconstruction of textual fragments."[14] The palazzo interior had already been reconstructed between 1945-1949 replacing the enfilade rooms of Palladian proportions, after which Marcenaro came to office and Albini received the commission to reinstall the collection. He produced a cohesive interior sequence through deceptively minimal means by accepting the plan while controlling natural and artificial light and introducing a restrained palette of black, gray and predominantly white surfaces. All vitrines, mounting systems, details and furniture were the result of his controlled intervention. His attention rendered a net effect of suspension and tension, with medieval to baroque art works bearing the weight of history against the light airiness of rationalist modern space as the lens through which the art is viewed. At Palazzo Bianco, Albini's transparency is not literally between spaces as much as phenomenally within each space, as the confines of the room disappear to give way to the art each contains. A significant amount of the tight budget was spent on reflective patterned floors embellished with Genoese motifs in polished black slate and white Carrara marble. The pavements ground the spaces above which the walls appear to float. Selected walls are uniformly paneled in matte finished grey slate to provide a background against which marble sculpture can be viewed. The prized object in the collection by Pisano from the tomb of Margherita di Brabante and was among the most controversial of Abini's installations. Supported on an electric machine piston for rotation, with viewer-controlled height, the contrast

between old and new was too great for public opinion and the fine fragment has since been relocated to the Sant'Agostino museum. Paintings were removed from false period style frames and either suspended from iron rods the length of the wall to hover over the floor, or lifted by steel posts mounted in antique marble fragments. The perceptual weight belongs to the *content* of the painted or carved subjects, rather than to their material or phenomenal form. Similarly suspended pencil thin fluorescents provide regular lighting directed at the eye-level canvases. With restrained anti-chromatic tectonic surfaces, Albini contrasted his folding pearwood frame chairs covered in warm leather that bear the marks of human contact. Albini's modernism was aesthetically rigorous but not "pure." Understanding the relational transparency of Palazzo Bianco calls for consideration of its clean, abstract whiteness and airiness in contrast to the surrounding city of the poorly lit, narrow, grey streets that characterize medieval Genoa.

The cultural restlessness of the period provoked varied design solutions to a wide range of typological needs. Albini had drawn criticism the same year Palazzo Bianco was opened with acclaim (1951) for his Pirovano youth hostel in the ski resort town of Cervinia. Milanese purists feared and denounced his abandonment of rationalist principles. Yet Kidder-Smith credited Albini with revitalizing vernacular building tectonics and typologies by raising a surrogate Alpine wood cottage on massive tapered stone piloti. The project brought him favorable review from Bruno Zevi, already smitten with his interpretation of organic architecture and editor of the APAO journal *Metron.*[15] Yet such diverse architectural responses to rural vs. urban and high vs. low culture led to more confusion than comprehension of Albini's talents. On closer inspection of the Pirovano lodge, one recognizes the familiar attention to modern construction details, revealing that Albini was not bound to style or dogma, but driven by innovation and appropriate, even provocative, problem solving that insisted on carefully-studied, well-crafted details and produced new, yet relevant, symbols.

PALAZZO ROSSO

The criteria for the reuse of the baroque Palazzo Brignole Sale as the civic gallery, known as Palazzo Rosso (red), was in strategy only very similar to Palazzo Bianco (white), which it faces across the Strada Nuova. The renaming of these palazzi from the family nobles who resided in them to colors symbolized their public occupation, and alluded to formal and even political contents, whether intentional or not. The Palazzo Rosso project took ten years to complete (1952-62) and has been so changed since as to render unrecognizable Albini's comprehensive project. Significant controversy over the gallery continues today, as recent historians have discovered the subjectivity involved in privileging its "original" 18th century interiors over other frescoes and spatial relations from subsequent eras. It is apparent that Marcenaro and Albini shared the desire to redesign history.[16] The walls had layers of frescoes and a complex sequence of inhabitation and ownership. Their reconstruction of the museum was described by a collaborator of Albini's as follows:

> *"The restoration was executed with expressive freedom. The glass walls, the large octagonal steel stair that joins all the floors, the red carpet that covers all the pavements, testify to a freedom outside the schemes and fears of breaking official laws which discipline the interventions of restoration of that époque."*[17]

The connection sequence was facilitated by Albini's monumental freestanding stair, a motif he repeated and refined throughout his career. In this setting the stair intervention appears too heavy and clumsy—a modern fetish that doesn't belong. His more delicate and beautiful interventions in Palazzo Rosso can now be found only in the archive storage rooms, minor sequences in section, well-crafted details, and publications.

The bomb-damaged original roof of the palazzo had already been reconstructed by Grossi before Mercenaro took the helm. Prior to 1954 Albini removed the recent "historic" roof consisting of replicated period vaults and replaced it with low concrete beams presenting a modern interior space. The site became Marcenaro's "attico" apartment which got minimal exterior light and sat too high for direct views of the narrow *viccoli* (alleys) outside. Detached from the city, she was umbilically joined to her museum since her semi-public domestic space was reached directly from the public gallery sequence designed inside a formerly semi-private palace. She had become a part of the building that defined her profession and her life, which were inseparable. Marcenaro's space did not feel claustrophobic or constrained by the past that supported it. Interior transparencies choreographed within reveal artworks suspended as protagonists woven into sublime modern space by a web of delicate "*allestimento*" or finish details. Once again, overcoming weight is thematic and can be seen in visual relationships between up and down in defiance of gravity and allowing unobstructed views across rooms. The loft stairs and fireplace hover but do not rest.

MUSEUM FOR THE TREASURES OF SAN LORENZO

Widely recognized as Albini's greatest work among the Genoa galleries was the magical abstraction of his Museum for the Treasures of San Lorenzo. It was his second commission from Caterina Marcenaro (1952-56). As the duomo church for the City of Genoa, San Lorenzo displays the periodic strata of medieval to Renaissance interventions typically found across Italy. The duomo church also borrows the familiar material palette of black and white horizontal striping reminis-

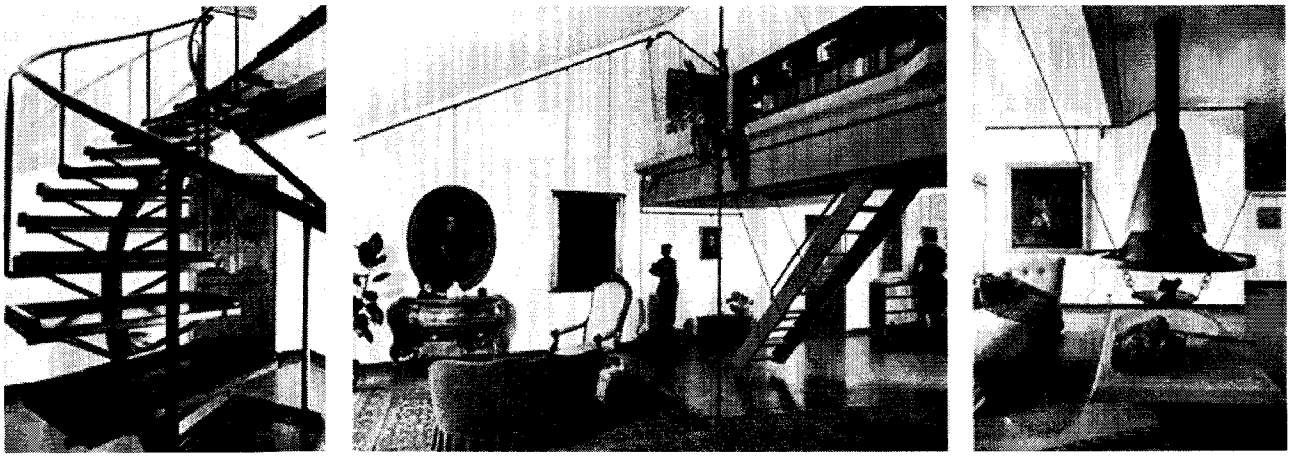


figure 7

cent of domestic, civic, and ecclesiastical monumental constructions of the Genoese Republic. During the crusades, patron son of Genoa, Guglielmo Embriaci, returned from Jerusalem with the reliquary and spoils attributed to Saint Lawrence, an invaluable collection of precious metals and gems including a 2000 year old green glass plate, an onyx platter alleged to have once held the head of John the Baptist, the arm of Saint Anne wrapped in a silver sleeve, numerous chalices, robes, bas-reliefs, and other religious relics.

The Museum for the Treasures of San Lorenzo was placed underground in an obscure location in the former duomo crypt. It can only be accessed from an angled stair descending from the rectory after traversing the nave of the cathedral, entered either from the side or the monumental portal. Like passage through the black frescoed hall at Pompeii's Villa of the Mysteries before entering the red rooms (conveying the stages of the apotheoses), the movement sequence is critical to prepare one's eyes and mind for the change in

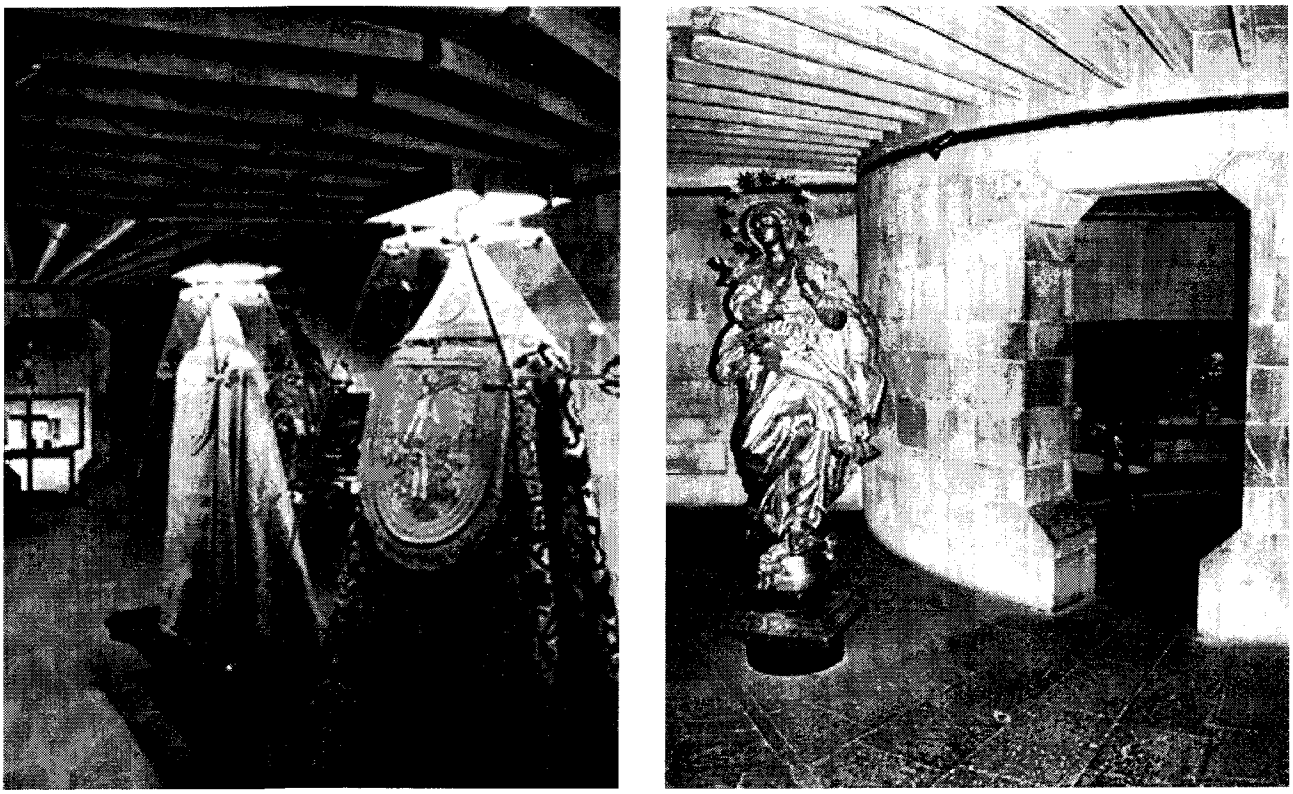
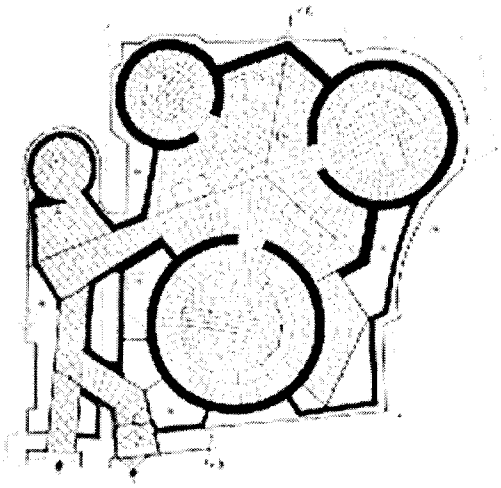
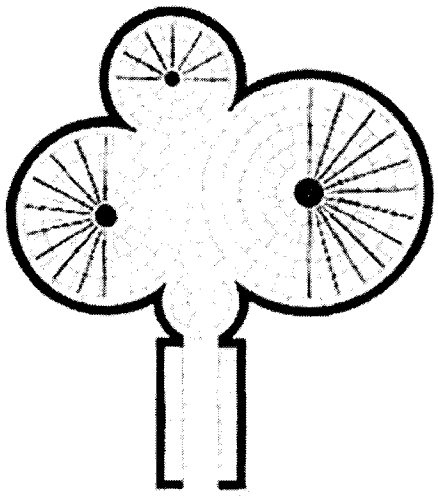


figure 8



franco albini's
treasury of san lorenzo in genoa, italy
1950-52



phillip johnson's
painting gallery in new canaan, ct
1965

figure 9

light and spirit. Working below ground, Albini is well aware of the physical qualities of Genoa, herself an inexhaustible quarry of ideas. Genoa is best understood when realizing that all building diagrams are subordinated to a topography that cannot be repressed. The use of this pedestrian passageway as connective tissue allows the anticipatory time to prepare visitors for a journey to the past. According to Franca Helg, Albini's partner, the diagram of the crypt was inspired by the carved underground *tholos* of Mycenae. Each of the four small round chambers is sunken in section to connect threshold and stair and to emphasize the precious separation of each sanctum designed to hold specifically grouped sacred objects. The entire gallery, composed of four chambers and an interstitial zone, is made of matte-finished charcoal gray slate. The surface motif of plane he employed in Palazzo Bianco here becomes a plastic, carved, uniform environment. Walls and floors are evenly textured with rectangular blocks. The block pattern serves to scale the spaces and underscore the radial design of each chamber. Ceilings made of cast-in-place concrete have fine, narrow spokes of support spines.

Albini's correlation between materials and lighting design is perceptually and phenomenally sublime. Simple glass and steel cases position artifacts at eye level and with hidden supports their encasements appears suspended in each chamber. Display boxes contain diffused light fixtures so that only reflective light off the glistening silver collections of reliquery with inlaid gemstones is visible; no bulbs or fixtures are apparent. Since all lighting is located inside the glass display cases, there is no surface glare. The non-reflective slate walls and floors do not detract from the splendor of the sublime treasures, while the chambers feel like geometrically carved earth.

Albini's rationalist origins are evident in his elegant aesthetic of line, plane, material tectonic and reflective, internalized transparency. His well-detailed shelving and hanging systems engage the design of lighting into the space to establish the theme of unity that reappears in his later gallery designs.[18] It is here evident that Albini pursued his practice grounded in the refined and essential modern expression of rationalism, yet with heightened sensuality, abandoning the geometric delineated plan of the abstract, isolated object. He is the first historically informed rationalist to appropriate the crypt archetype and free it through his modern interpretation. His project for San Lorenzo is ingeniously and creatively planned; a materially inspired architecture that poetically transcends the dogma of functionalism.

Although I know of no scholarship that has connected Philip Johnson to the work of Franco Albini, the San Lorenzo Treasury project gives me cause to believe that Johnson was aware of and interested in Albini's work during Johnson's own peak, after he had learned the language of transparency from Mies van der Rohe. His 1965 Painting

Gallery buried on the grounds of the New Canaan estate bears a striking similarity in plan to the *tholos* diagram of Albini's crypt.[19] Beyond the plan similarities of four circular rooms with similar radii, the painting crypt's location underground and the floor paving graphics render the similarities between galleries uncanny. However, spatially, materially, and expressively, the two submerged sequences could not be more different. As period pieces, Johnson's work is private and designed to suite only his own collecting demands, while Albini's design for a public gallery uniquely addressed the requirements of a demanding historic collection of artifacts.

Franco Albini's work was perhaps best understood and celibrated by Manfredo Tafuri who wrote about the San Lorenzo Museum:

Albini managed to sublimate the esoteric nature of his referents. The dialectic between spaces, the variations of light. The dialog between the glass cases and the ambiguous suggestiveness of the interconnected organisms articulated one of the most original ingredients of Albini's poetics: a surrealism all the more subtle in that it was resolved in technically faultless vocabulary...'suspended image'... It was the same abstraction that characterized Albini's interiors: ephemeral containers for magically transported historical objects. ...Albini created masterpieces of representational virtuousity and dreamlike suggestiveness. His lyricism resided in the erect, suspended, and reinforced frames...severity alludes to an absence without ever becoming tragic. [19]

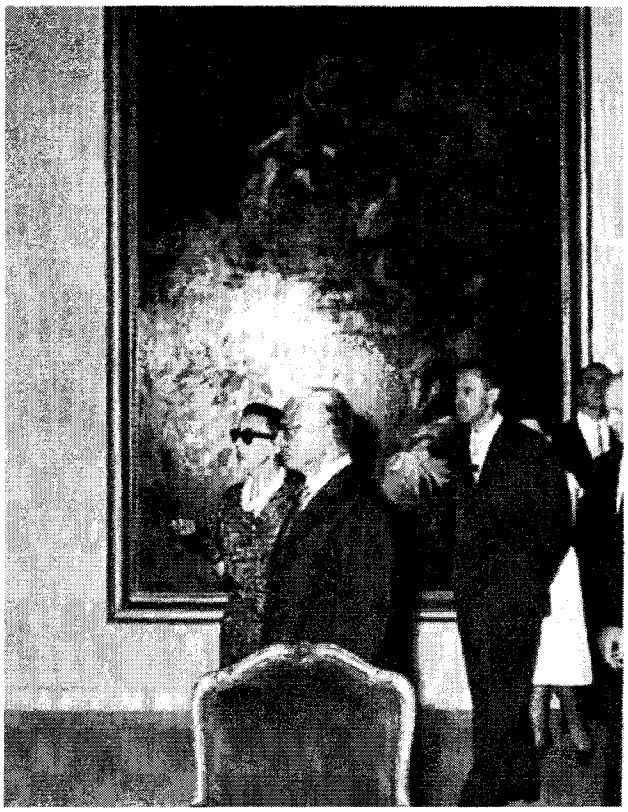


figure 10

CONCLUSION

Albini's muse within, his inspiration for the three Genoese galleries, is two-fold: his patron and commissioner, Caterina Marcenaro, and his personal language of internal transparencies, literal and phenomenal. The diverse nature of his varied works across the span of a 48 year career with many collaborators demonstrates not only his talent as an architect, but his pluralist freedom and creativity in problem-solving. While closely reading individual works may be more rewarding than seeking stylistic or ideological categories, it remains useful to reposition the architect and his projects into the cultural context of post-war Italy. Italian modern architecture of the reconstruction period appears different from international style modernism. So we can ask, does the *tendenza* exhibit *italianita'*, a culturally bound body of work, however distinct among itself? Umberto Eco's comment for the recent Guggenheim exhibition on Italy of the period offers his answer and some insight:

"An Italian character does exist. The first is a transhistorical characteristic that relates to 'genialita' *(ingenuity) and* 'inventivita' *(inventiveness)...and consists in our ability to marry humanist tradition with technological development. What has undoubtedly acted as a brake on our culture, the predominance of the humanistic over the technological, has also permitted certain fusions, eruptions of fantasy within technology and the technologization of fantasy. Secondly, Italy is a country that has known enormous crises, foreign domination, massacres, and yet (and for this reason) has produced Raphael and Michelangelo....what often fascinates foreigners is that in Italy economic crises, uneven development, terrorism accompany great inventiveness."* [20]

It is timely to reconsider Albini's work in Genoa, where he has constructed many works in addition to those considered here, as well as noteworthy interventions by other modern eclectics, including Marcello Piacentini, Carlo Luigi Daneri, Ignazio Gardella and Aldo Rossi. I was in Genoa during June this past year, one month before the G8 held its summit meeting in the city that suffered terribly for the four-day hiatus. The death of a young demonstrator and widespread destruction left the city in physical ruin. Genoese citizens were left wondering why they should have been subject to such violence when they never invited the worlds "leaders" or the subsequent protestors to come. Media coverage delivered us smoke and despair while providing no insights about the medieval city with the largest

in tact historic fabric from that period in Europe, nor recognition of these and other gems of modern architecture. We must aim that by 2004 when Genoa is named European "Capital of Culture," these treasures of expressionist pluralism will be better understood and revered. The unbearable lightness of lyrical modernism is an absence of presence; its sophisticated monumentality is frequently misread or overlooked yet deserves renewed attention.

NOTES

[1] Ignasi de Sola-Morales, **Differences,** Topographies of Contemporary Architecture, translations by Graham Thompson, edited by Sarah Whiting(Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997) p. 25.

[2] Gianni Vattimo, from **Modernita' senza Avantguardia,** *Quaderni di Lotus* by Pietro De Rossi, with translations by C. Evans and A. Rabino, (Milan: Electa, 1990) p. 13.

[3] G.E. Kidder Smith published ***L'Italia Costruisce:*** *sua architettura moderna e sua eredita' indigena,* (Italy Builds: her modern architecture and her indigenous heredity) with an introduction to Italian architecture tradition by Ernesto N. Rogers. Before demonstrating examples of varied new responses to ten building types, he discusses the existing landscape and urban inheritance of persistent formal conditions, including piazzas, hilltowns, public streets, porticoes and fountains. It was simultaneously published in English and Italian in the US, Great Britian, and Italy, (Milan: Edizioni di Communita, 1955).

[4] Dennis Doordan, "Rebuilding the House of Man," **The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-1968** (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1994), p. 586.

[5] Ignasi de Sola-Morales, p. 53-54.

[6] Italian theory and critique of architecture throughout the modern century centered on the nationalism of architectural tendencies, referred to as *tendenza.*

[7] Helg, Franca, **Franco Albini 1930-1970**, (New York: Rizzoli, 1979) biography, p. 13.

[8] "The quality of the work of art, and thus of architecture, can no longer be gauged either by any objective standard or by forces of invention, innovation, or the subject's singularity....This contemporary architecture of the void provokes rather than soothes." de Sola-Morales in **Differences**, p. 25. See also Anthony Vidler's criticism of transparency's ability to convey monumentality in "Spaces:" "We are presented with the apparently strange notion of a public monumentality that is more than reticent—indeed wants literally to disappear, be invisible—even as it represents the full weight of the French state. And perhaps the underpinnings of the present revival should indeed be sought in the difficult area of representation, one that is no doubt joined to the problematic outlined by Gianni Vattimo, that of 'weak' or background monumentality, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, to the self-perceived role of architecture in the construction of identity. For if it was in the task of constructing a new and modern subject that transparency in architecture was first adduced, the present passion for see-through buildings is indubitably linked to the attempt to construct a state identity of technological modernity against a city identity (Paris, Chirac) enmeshed in a tricky historicism of preservation." **The Architectural Uncanny** (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992) p. 220.

[9] Manfredo Tafuri, **History of Italian Architecture 1944-1985** (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989) p. 49.

[10] Albini was later commission to restore and add to the Sant'Agostino Museum in two phases between 1962-1969, and 1977-1986 with Franca Helg, Antonio Piva, and Marco Albini. The development of this intervention is the scope of another paper.

[11] Given the position of the city, relatively little was lost or destroyed due to bombings of the strategic coastal port city.

[12] It has been alleged that Mario Labo', political activist for the left who produced a few works in Genoa, introduced Albini to Marcenaro.

[13] Franca Helg wrote about their Albini's and Marcenaro's working relationship: "Working with Caterina Marnearo, a woman of exceptional sensitivity, tenacity, and rigor, was often difficult on account of the severity of the demands she imposed, but Albini's working methodology was characterized by a desire to understand to the greatest degree possible the problems at stake, delving into them thoroughly. He responded to her insightful criticisms, strengthening his work with new images and new suggestions." **Franco Albini Architecture and Design 1934-1977** by Stephen Leet (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1990) p. 16.

[14] Tafuri, p. 49.

[15] Bruno Zevi was mesmerized by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and sewed the seeds of an imported "democratic architecture" through the Associazione per l'Architettura Organica/Association for Organic Architecture.)

[16] essays by Piero Bottardo, current director of the Palazzo Rosso Museum, and Clario di Fabio, director of Albini's later San Agostino Museum in Genoa, have written about the designers early decisions and problems in the historiographic analysis and response in *"Una protagonista della scena culturale genovese fra 1950-1970:Caterina Marcenaro fra casa e musei."*di Fabio, and *" Palazzo Rosso dai Brignole-Sale a Caterino Marcenaro: luci ed ombre di un caposaldo della museologia italiana,"* by Bottardo. Original unpublished papers provided to author.

[17] Antonio Piva and Vittorio Prina, *"Il restauro e' attuato con liberta' espressiva. Le vetrate di cristallo, la grande scala ottogonale di acciaio che collegha tutti I piani, la moquette rossa che ricopre tutti i pavimenti, testimoniano una una liberta' fuori dagli schemi dale paure d'infragere le leggi ufficiali che disciplinano gli interventi di restaur di quell'epoca."* translation by author. **Franco Albini 1905-1977**, Piva and Prina (Milan: Electa, 1998). P. 35.

[18] See Albini's San Agostino Museum in Genoa (1963-79), Milan subway stations for lines 1 and 2 (1962-69), Sampo-Olivetti Store in Paris (1958-60), and the Civic Museum for the cloister of the Eremitani in Padua (1969-79).

[19] Manfredo Tafuri, p. 50.

[20] From Guggenheim Museum catalog for the exhibition ***"The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-68"*** by Thomas Krens. P. 3.

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