

The Façade as an Architectural Interior

PATRIZIO MARTINELLI

Miami University

Façade is the architectural place where private and public meet and the building's "face". The designer can design the façade to express the inside, the reaction to the outside, or as an independent mask hiding the interiors. But façade can be not only a mere skin, but a device with depth, density, thickness. The portals and prothyrooms in medieval religious buildings are devices that anticipates the rituals and spaces of the interiors.

In many examples the façade, besides of being a cultural or political representation of the clients, becomes an interior place, a space to live, move, stay in.

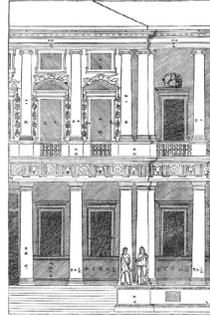
This kind of façade is represented by two paradigms by Andrea Palladio. One is Redentore church façade in Venice, designed by the overlapping of five façades, each belonging to a component of the interior space.

The second is Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza, actually a "façade-building" characterized by two loggias. The one on the ground floor belongs to the city as a public space, shady, protected and safe: actually, an urban interior. The upper loggia belongs to the residents' private realm, where they can experience the outside, through a privileged view to the city, but it's also as a "theatrical stage" where the family's power and wealth was shown to the people.

Another example of the facade as interior space is Villa Wiegand by Behrens, who uses a classical interior element of the roman house, the peristylum, and transforms it in façade. Instead of building the villa around the peristylum, like in the roman house, he moves it outside, between the street and the entrance door, as a filter between public and private space. The process is clear and strong: the peristylum, which originally should have been in the heart of the house, has been moved outside, in direct contact with the street. The classical order of the entrance in the roman domus street-entrance-vestibule-atrium-peristylum, is changed into street-peristylum-entrance-vestibule.

The other meaning of this is rhetorical: since Wiegand was an archaeologist, the building from outside becomes a statement, a sort of architecture parlante, telling us something about the client's role, profession, interests, status.

Although Le Corbusier rarely quotes Palladio as a precedent, often we can find his influence in his work. In particular when he works on the façade topic, feeling the necessity to give depth and strength to his elevations, the two paradigms seem to appear on Corbu's work. The overlapping of layers, each belonging to different elements, is the compositional principle of his purist paintings, which he applies to his building façades too, like in House Curutchet, where the overlapping becomes a tool to build an interior. The layers of sun-breaker, structure, pan de verre, floors and roof build this façade, detached from the rest of the house like in Villa Wiegand (a project he worked on when he was in Berlin), open to the street and to the park in front of it. But it isn't only an elevation, it's an architectural interior: it's Dr. Curutchet's clinic with above a hanging garden, protected by a concrete canopy, a room in the open space facing the park. It's an interior space, transparent and open towards outside, it's the place of life and work that belongs, together with the courtyard where the ramp is, both to the house and to the city.

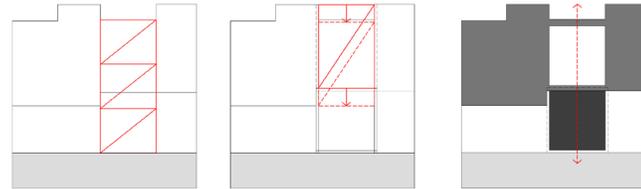
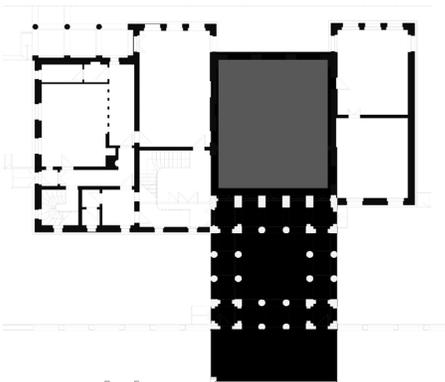


Façade is the architectural place where private and public meet and it's the building's "face". The designer can use the façade to reveal the inside or design it as a reaction to the outside, or as an independent mask hiding the interiors. But façade can be designed not as a mere skin, but as a device with depth, density, thickness. The portals and prothyrooms in medieval religious buildings are devices that anticipates the rituals and spaces of the interiors.

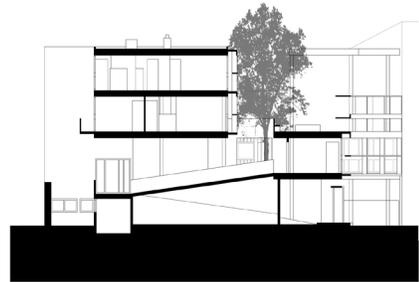
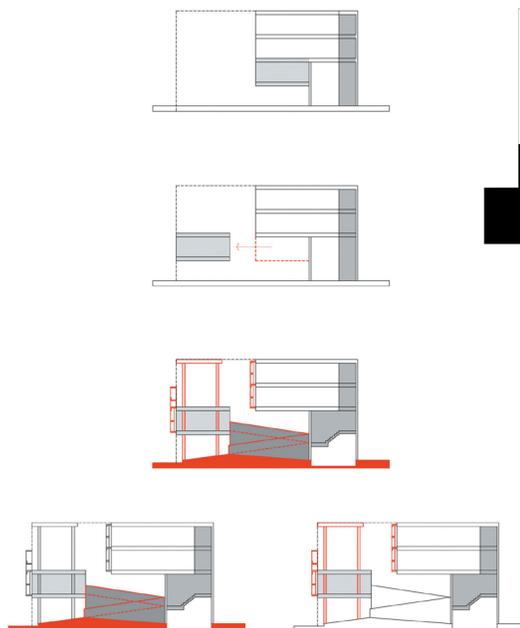
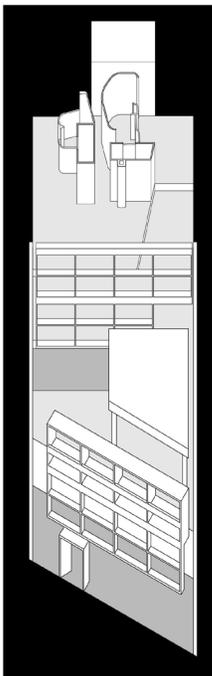
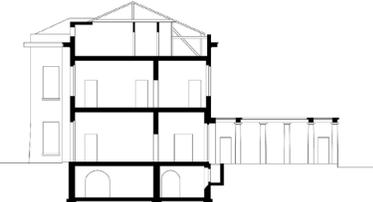
In many examples the façade, besides of being a cultural or political representation of the clients, actually becomes an interior place, a space to live, move, stay in.

This kind of façade can be represented by two paradigms by Andrea Palladio. One is the façade of Redentore church in Venice, designed by the overlapping of five façades, each belonging to a component that build the whole spatial entity of interior space.

The second is Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza, actually a "façade-building" characterized by two continuous loggias. The one on the ground floor belongs to the city as a public space, shady, protected and safe: actually, an urban interior. The upper loggia belongs to the residents' private realm, where they can experience another way of dealing with the outside, through a privileged view to the city, but it's also as a "theatrical stage" where the family's power and wealth was shown to the people.



In Villa Wiegand Behrens takes a classical interior element of the roman house, the peristylum, and transforms it in façade: the interior becomes an exterior. Instead of building the villa around the peristylum, how it happens in the roman house, he moves it outside, putting it between the limit of the street and the entrance door, as a filter between the public space and the private space. The process is clear and strong: the peristylum, which originally should have been in the heart of the house, has been moved outside, in direct contact with the street. The "natural" order of the entrance sequence of the roman domus *street-entrance-vestibule-atrium-peristylum*, is changed into *street-peristylum-entrance-vestibule*. The other meaning of this is rhetorical: as Wiegand was an archaeologist, the building from outside becomes a statement, a sort of *architecture parlante*, telling us something about the client role, profession, interests, and status.



Although Le Corbusier rarely quotes Palladio as a precedent, I think that often the lesson of the Italian master is recognizable in his work. In particular when he works on the façade topic, feeling the necessity to give depth and strength to his elevations, the two paradigms seem to appear on Corbu's drawing table. The overlapping of layers, each belonging to different parts and elements, is the compositional principle we can find in the purist paintings of the young Jeanneret. A principle that he applies to the façades of his buildings too, like in House Curutchet, where the overlapping becomes a tool to build an interior. The layers of sun-breaker, structure, *pan de verre*, floors and roof build this façade, detached from the rest of the house like in Behrens' Villa Wiegand (a project he worked on when he was in Berlin), open to the street and to the park in front of it. But it isn't only an elevation, it's an architectural interior: it's Dr. Curutchet's clinic with above a hanging garden, protected by a concrete canopy, a room in the open space facing the park. It's an interior space, transparent and open towards outside, it's the place of life and work that belongs, together with the courtyard where the ramp is, both to the house and to the city.

THE FAÇADE AS AN ARCHITECTURAL INTERIOR