

EXHIBITION REVIEW

L'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca per una collezione del disegno contemporaneo

Curator: Francesco Moschini

Accademia di San Luca, Roma

20 December 2008 – 30 June 2009

Officially founded in 1593 to highlight the important role of drawing in painting, sculpture and architecture, the National Academy of Saint Luke exhibits a new collection of contemporary drawings, on view through June 2009, after which it will travel elsewhere in Europe. First housed in the small church of San Luca on the Esquiline Hill before moving to Pietro da Cortona's Santi Luca e Martina in the Roman Forum, the prestigious Academy has occupied its current location in the Palazzo Carpegna near the Trevi Fountain since 1934.

Reviving an earlier tradition in which every member newly admitted to the Academy gave an example of his art to the institute (a "pièce de réception"), the Academy has asked current members to contribute two drawings each from different periods of their careers. Expanding on the rich collection of about 5,500 historical drawings, which date primarily from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the exhibition celebrates these new contemporary drawings, the works of eighty members.

The exhibition is mounted in four ground-floor rooms at the Palazzo Carpegna, the galleries visually connected with a uniform light blue color. The entrance room displays drawings from all disciplines within the Academy (painting, sculpture, and architecture), while the three remaining spaces each feature one of the disciplines alone. In each room, vertical panels set on a diagonal identify the artists on display. In addition to the work of painters and sculptors, the show includes work by thirty architects.*

Most of the architectural drawings date from 1980 to the present. Employing a range of graphic media, the majority of the architects have used ink or pencil on cardboard or tracing paper, but also pastel on brown paper (Cellini), crayon or

*Alessandro Anselmi, Gaetana Aulenti, Carlo Aymonino, Oriol Bohigas i Guardiola, Enrico Bordogna, Mario Botta, Saverio Busiri Vici, Guido Canali, Guido Canella, Francesco Cellini, Michele De Lucchi, Pietro Derossi, Massimiliano Fuksas, Romaldo Giurgola, Vittorio Gregotti, Glauco Gresleri, Danilo Guerri, Antonio Monestiroli, Adolfo Natalini, Aimaro Oreglia d'Isola, Nicola Pagliara, Lucio Passarelli, Renzo Piano, Paolo Portoghesi, Franco Purini, Giorgio Raineri, Umberto Riva, Luciano Semerani, Enzo Zacchioli, Paolo Zermani..



View of the entrance to the exhibition in the Palazzo Carpegna
Photograph: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca

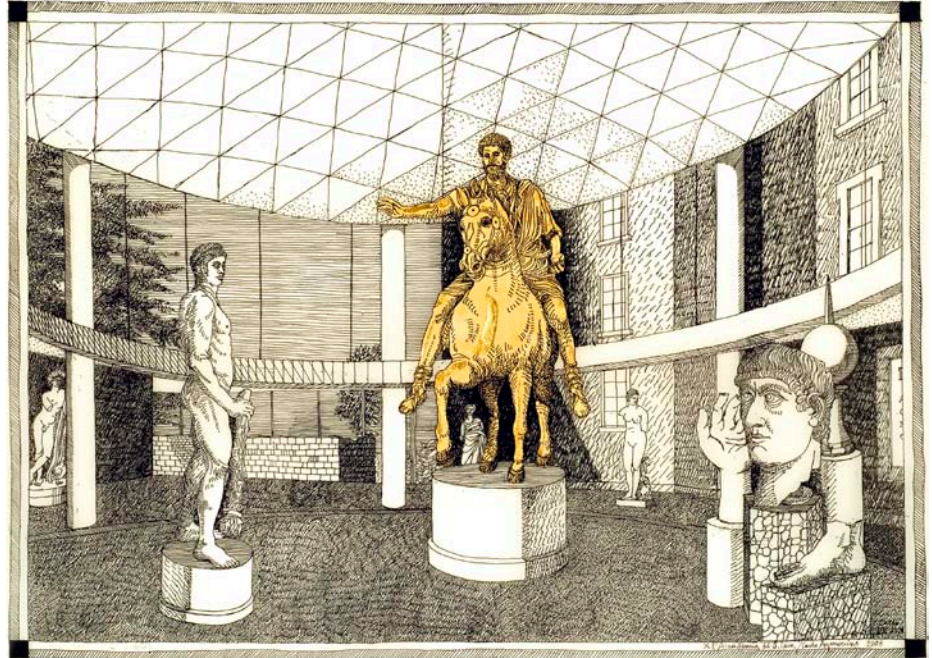
colored pen on tracing paper (Anselmi, Fuksas), watercolour (Isola, Zacchioli), and collage (Monestirolì). The types of drawings chosen by the architects also vary widely: some are construction documents (Aulenti) or freehand full-scale construction details (Guerra). Others, such as those by Botta, Canella, Fuksas, Purini, and Zermani are sketches or concept drawings. Most, however, are fully developed presentation drawings, such as black and white perspectival renderings.

Among the wide selection, the project for the San Pio da Pietrelcina church in San Giovanni Rotondo by Alessandro Anselmi (2007) is particularly striking for its power and expressiveness. The project by Francesco Cellini for the former Jung-hans area on the Giudecca island in Venice (1995) depicts an evocative atmosphere and refined technique. Curiously, Massimiliano Fuksas's 2003 drawing of the Fiera Milano displays a style remarkably unchanged from the quick impression he used in 1976 to depict his well-known Sport Complex in Paliano.

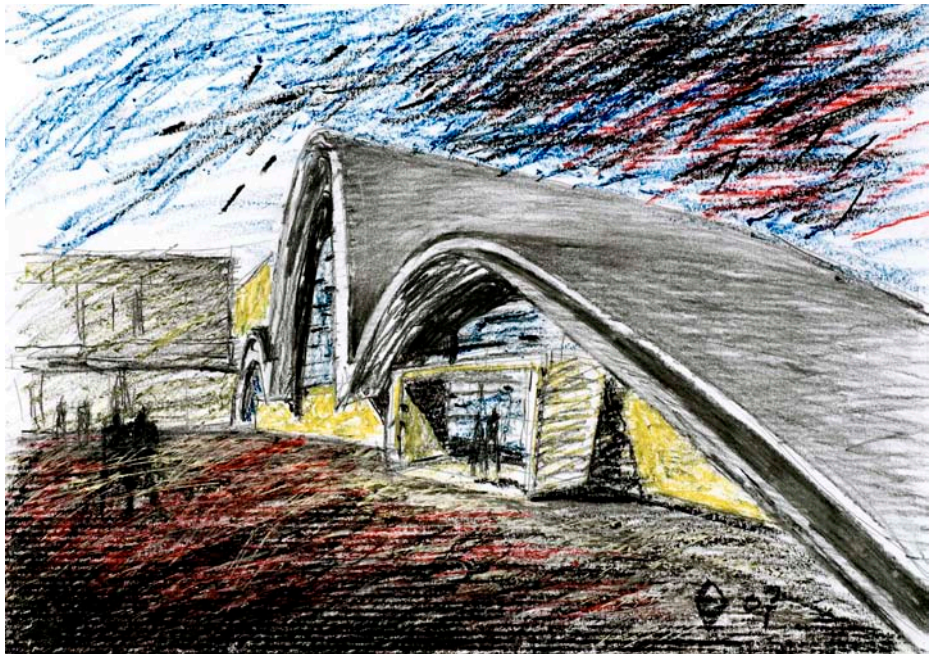
The meaning of the architects' drawings is much debated and they can be read in many ways. The Academy has chosen to feature drawing because it is understood as "the crucial moment of every visual art, when an idea, portrayed more freely and directly, more clearly expresses an author's hand," as the introductory text to the exhibition explains. Among those on display, nevertheless, only a few could be viewed as a medium for immediate expression of the architects' ideas, while the vast majority are in fact presentation drawings, which require a long working process before completion. Therefore, the exhibition seems to imply a notion of drawing as autonomous work, a theoretical elaboration; furthermore, as a self-contained architecture that does not necessarily need to be built, that is not simply a step in the process that transforms an idea into its realization. This notion was widespread and much debated in Italy in the 1980s, and usually labelled "architettura disegnata." The architectural fantasy by Carlo Aymonino, "Il Colosso, il Colosseo, l'Arco di Costantino" (2001), and those entitled "La città compatta" (1966) and "La città uguale" (2000) by Franco Purini illustrate this approach.

Since the mid-1990s the widespread use of CAAD and digital design has deeply changed the way of making architectural drawings. Perhaps certain drawings, such as some of the very elaborate presentation drawings on show, have now literally become a sort of "academic exercise," but the first approach to a project with

Carlo Aymonino, project for covering the *Giardino Romano* on the Capitoline Hill, with museum installation, Rome, 2008
Photograph: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca



Alessandro Anselmi, project for the church of San Pio da Pietrelcina, San Giovanni Rotondo, 2007
Photograph: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca



sketches or summary concept drawings will probably always remain a fundamental and inevitable step in architectural creation.

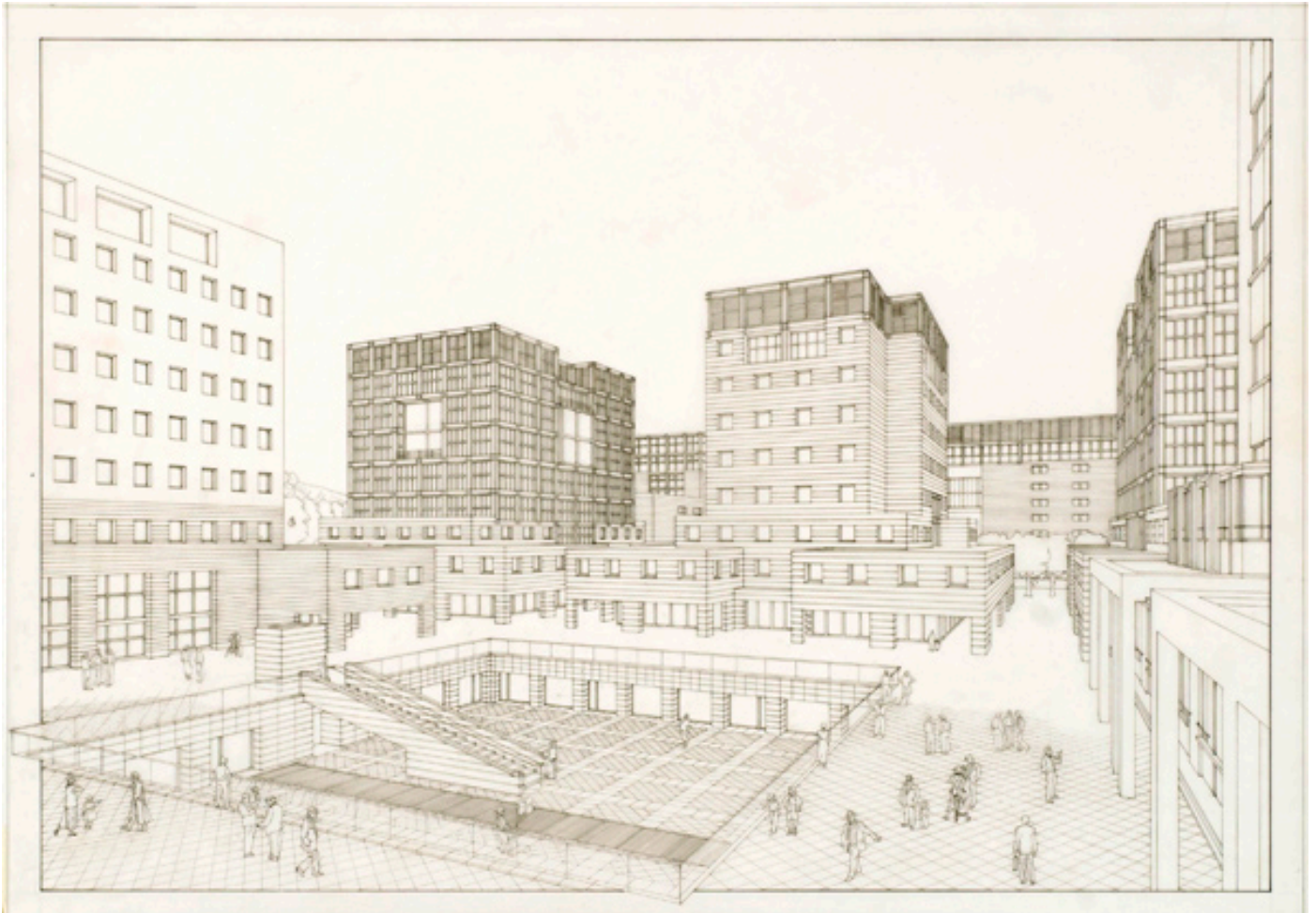
Curator Francesco Moschini is Professor of the History of Architecture at the Politecnico di Bari and a member of the scholars' section of the Accademia di San Luca. In his work he has frequently referred to authors including Aldo Rossi and to concepts such as the so-called "progetto di crisi." In 1978 he founded the Architettura Arte Moderna Gallery in Rome (AAM), dedicated to promoting the "culture of the project" and to "defining the theoretical dimension of the project." The gallery examines the relationship between theory, history and design in architecture and the visual arts, and this exhibition seems closely related to the AAM program. Given that the exhibition displays only one or two drawings by each of the members, yet shown all together, it is intrinsically heterogeneous, fragmentary, and to some extent "casual." This coincides very well, therefore, with Moschini's interests in "contemporaneity" as marked by "crossing sights," "intersections," "trespassing" and "contaminations among diverse entities."**

** For the information here on Francesco Moschini and the AAM Gallery, see <http://www.aamgalleria.it/la-galleria.php?id=3700-Profilo-e-nota-biografica-di-Francesco-Moschini> and <http://www.aamgalleria.it/cfm-home.php>.

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Publication related to the exhibition:

Francesco Moschini, editor, *L'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca: Per una collezione del disegno contemporaneo. Pittura, scultura, architettura*, Rome: De Luca, 2009, 256 pp., 162 color illus., € 50, ISBN 978-88-8016



Vittorio Gregotti, view of pedestrian plaza with surrounding buildings, competition for transformation of the Pirelli zone in Bicocca, Milan, 1988
Photograph: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca