THE LESSONS OF ROME:
ARCHITECTS AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY, 1947-1966

A Dissertation in
Art History
by
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Abstract

In 1947, the American Academy in Rome faced a fundamental decision: to either recommit to the Beaux-Arts artistic mission behind its establishment in 1894, or adapt to a drastically changed postwar environment. Although characterized as “a holdout against Modernism,” this does not accurately describe its relationship with American architecture between 1947-1966. During these years, the Academy actively welcomed emerging and established modern architects through fellowships, residencies, and administrative roles. Its altered policies were designed to align it with the discipline’s mid-century embrace of modernism and redefine the Rome Prize in architecture to serve a new set of professional values.

The Academy’s attempts to transform its institutional culture and maintain relevance to one of its core constituencies would ultimately succeed, despite entrenched internal opposition and lingering doubts. Forty well-credentialed young graduates from the nation’s top architecture schools would come to Rome during these years to enjoy fellowships of unprecedented flexibility. Some, most notably Robert Venturi and Michael Graves, would later rise to considerable prominence, burnishing the Rome Prize’s reputation among architects in the late twentieth century. But all the Fellows provided collective, crucial momentum to the modernist Grand Tour. They helped keep Rome on the architect’s map, and contributed to ongoing redefinitions of Rome’s relevance to contemporary practice.

A new American architectural establishment also tied itself to the Academy. The inaugural postwar residency of George Howe announced its dramatic shift in allegiance from classicist to modernist design ideology, and Louis Kahn’s career-changing Academy stay would attain mythic status. But a dozen others whose names are seldom associated with Rome—including Max Abramovitz, Edward Larabee Barnes, Pietro Belluschi, Wallace K. Harrison, Eero
Saarinen, and Edward Durell Stone—would lend the Academy their time and names in varying capacities, buttressing its claim to professional legitimacy. As architects of the official U.S. presence abroad during the Cold War, their support for an institution struggling to reconcile the rhetoric of cultural power with modernity is utterly appropriate. Ultimately, the Academy’s architectural survival during the postwar period contributed a distant but engaged perspective on the American discipline, and helped architects continue to learn new lessons from Rome.
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In loving memory of my father, Lawrence Dale Ohnstad,
and our Saturdays at the library
Introduction: Why Rome?

Why Rome? Because all this uncounted wealth, this endless store heaped up by the hands, the passions and the minds of all that long procession of the generations; this still undiminished fountain men call Italy—all this belongs to no one people, to no group nor class nor nation. It is yours and it is mine; it is there for all who would seek. But it will not, may not, come to us; it must be sought, sought in the land of its making.¹

—C. Grant LaFarge, Secretary of the American Academy in Rome, 1919

When asked to assess the long-term effects of his fellowship from the American Academy in Rome, architect Thomas N. Larson’s response was enthusiastic and effusive: “My Rome experience has given me an ‘edge’ on my associates in the profession. My design sense has been given greater meaning, and I feel is expressed in my present work more now than ever before…” To the question “Why Rome?” he replied simply, “where else! …its [sic] obvious.”² In light of the city’s perpetual, magnetic appeal to millennia of travelers, it might indeed appear obvious that any opportunity, any excuse to go to Rome—for architects as much as anyone else—is sufficient cause and justification to bask in the glories of the Eternal City.

But is it obvious? Faith in the architectural relevance of Rome maps easily onto both the romantic, classicizing historicism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the discipline’s patterns of educational tourism since the late twentieth century. However, Larson’s Rome Prize fellowship belongs to neither period. Larson went to Rome from 1962-

1964, immediately following his graduation from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (GSD). He would spend most of his professional career as a partner in the design firm founded by Walter Gropius with other GSD graduates, The Architects Collaborative (TAC). His biography thereby conjoins two opposing architectural value systems: the collectivist functionalism promoted by Gropius at the Deutsches Werkbund, the Bauhaus, and Harvard; and the academic traditionalism and individual artistic inspiration, which Rome has symbolized for centuries, and that venerable institutions like the American Academy were founded to promote. I find this disjunctive association to be jarring, confusing, and intriguing. Despite Larson’s blithe confidence, it is far from apparent that modern architects like him do in fact belong in Rome, or at an “academy” of any sort.

Architect and critic Joseph Giovannini posed this very question in a Progressive Architecture essay of 1994, a year when numerous celebrations marked the American Academy in Rome’s centennial. Giovannini had no qualms with the Rome Prize’s provision of unstructured time since “a year off is, of course, a godsend for architects too busy working to think.” However, he was deeply skeptical of the host institution’s architectural influence, describing the Academy as “a holdout against Modernism” that had long been “quietly controversial.” Furthermore, he found the location of those tempting, much-needed sabbaticals troubling, since “during fellowships Rome is a pervasive and demanding presence rather than a transparent one.” In Giovannini’s view, the Academy and its setting would thus tend to hinder, rather than further, the creative formation of a modern architect.

This concern with Rome’s opacity implicitly posits its opposite: the positive notion of a hypothetically “transparent” place where young architects could enjoy a much-needed

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year of professional development free of the insidious effects of the caput mundi. Giovannini’s adjective also, appropriately, invokes an image of the glass box, modern architecture’s most pervasive aesthetic trope. Yet what real location could ever provide such an ideal, perfectly neutral study environment? Even an undetermined location simply transfers the burden of choice onto the young architect and would ultimately reflect each individual’s own biases, knowledge, and preferences.

Clearly, Giovannini’s objection to Rome was not intended to propose alternative sites of perfect neutrality, but to warn against that city’s unique dangers. In so doing he echoed the authoritative voice of Le Corbusier, who wrote so memorably in 1923 that “to send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life,” and described the French Academy in Rome as “the cancer of French architecture.” During both the 1920s and the 1990s, Rome and the academies founded to codify and perpetuate its cultural legacy appeared to oppose two fundamental tenets of the Modern Movement: an aesthetic grounded in the cultural and technical realities of the present moment rather than eternally valid traditions, and a progressive commitment to extending the benefits of good architectural design to society as a whole, not just the elite. Rome conflicts with the Zeitgeist because it embodies the cycles and span of time itself, on the scale of millennia, the great historical foil against which the “modern” (as opposed to the merely “contemporary”) defined itself. After centuries of use and artistic contemplation, a Roman building such as the Pantheon has become far more than an embodiment of the Hadrianic moment of its conception and construction. In addition, for most of its history Rome has been

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synonymous with various forms of temporal, spiritual, and cultural power, while Le Corbusier and the Modern Movement associated themselves with the aesthetic avant-garde’s opposition to political and artistic establishments. To invoke Rome, whether in a façade or a dissertation title, generally appears more like a reactionary attempt to capitalize on its glory and authority than any sort of revolutionary act.

To Le Corbusier’s initial fears that the sensitive young artist will be blinded by the city’s pervasive “horrors,” Giovannini added concerns specific to his own moment in the mid-1990s. Rome’s historical and symbolic imbrication with occidentalist imperialism made it an epicenter of the “eternal verities” sustaining Western cultural self-consciousness which postmodern and multicultural critiques fought to destabilize. Giovannini’s skeptical view of the Academy was undoubtedly informed by this apparent distance between Rome’s traditional cultural role and modern architecture’s ideological and aesthetic orientation. Given how the city’s sensuous appeal, its quick and readily invoked authority, and its insinuating combination of familiarity and unknowability naturalize and camouflage its oppressive origins, can Rome teach values that are consistent with modernism’s cultural aims? Furthermore, is it possible for an academy, particularly in such a location, to avoid being “academic”? How can any academy be relevant to a profession committed to an anti-academic paradigm?

Giovannini concedes that the Academy had been a significant actor in American architecture during two distinct periods. In the earliest decades of its history it buttressed the fin de siècle academic classicism it was founded to promote. In the late 1960s it would serve as “a staging platform for the Post-Modernist counter-reformation,” when its isolation and independence allowed it to help launch corrective critiques of an exhausted establishment.
modernism. This account dovetails with that provided by Fikret K. Yegül in *Gentlemen of Instinct and Breeding: Architecture at the American Academy, 1894-1940.* Published only three years before Giovannini’s article, its well-documented history of the early Academy’s elitism and antagonism towards modern architecture may have influenced his views. Yegül tempers his book’s scathing critique somewhat by pointing out the flawed Academy’s eventual return to architectural relevance: “beginning with Louis I. Kahn in 1951, many of the creative names in architecture in the 1960s and 1970s made their peace with history through the Academy and through Rome.” He presents the primary importance of the altered institution that emerged after the war as a bridge to postmodern historicism:

Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, the Academy gradually became the center for a revival of interest in a new, broadly interpreted classicism and intellectual historicism. It provided the facilities as well as the inspiration to study historical architecture to a new generation of architects, including Louis I. Kahn, Robert Venturi, Romaldo Giurgola, Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Charles Moore, and Stanley Tigerman.

Yegül’s list of participating luminaries does illustrate the Academy’s renewed disciplinary relevance of the 1970s and 1980s, when Rome was unquestionably an important point of reference for ambitious American architects. Giovannini saw this moment, arguably the Academy’s architectural zenith, as a brief exception to its typical distance from a discipline dominated by modernism since the 1940s. Certainly a chasm divided the confident faith in

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7 Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1991. Yegül’s book set the stage for my own research, which is to a great extent my attempt to continue a similar sort of disciplinary and institutional analysis into a later, less-familiar period in the Academy’s history.
8 Yegül, *Gentlemen,* p. 120.
9 Yegül, *Gentlemen,* p. 4. The involvement of Kahn, Venturi and Graves will be discussed in further detail herein. Giugola served on the 1966 Rome Prize jury, was a Resident in 1978 and a Trustee from 1978-90; Moore a juror in 1966 and 1974, and Resident in 1975 and 1981; Meier was a Resident in 1973, Tigerman in 1980. See their respective entries in Kohl, et al., *Centennial Directory.*
10 It may also overstate the case somewhat; it remains to be demonstrated that Moore, Meier, and Tigerman studied historic architecture in detail or were otherwise creatively influenced by their respective Academy residencies, which were typically quite brief.
classicism that drove the Academy’s establishment in 1894 from the cultural sphere in which it would operate after World War II. As Yegül notes:

The sensibilities of postwar America into which the Academy stepped were fundamentally different than those of the interwar years. It was a world of optimism but also of hard realism and technology, which, gradually and at its intellectual best, developed into a questioning and analytic spirit. It was also a world of emerging new nations; of acute social, political, and ethnic consciousness; and of the affirmation of basic human rights and egalitarianism. A person or an institution would feel uncomfortable making broad, sweeping, and unsupported generalizations on culture, art, and human nature. And, perhaps, it was a world destined for occasional intellectual migraine because the innocence – or the simple nescience – required to maintain such beliefs had been lost forever.

There was no more talk among the Academy’s upper echelon of aesthetic superiority or the preeminence of pure styles or the opiate loveliness of Quattrocento Italy in twentieth-century America. There were no more sincere but self-righteous efforts to cloister and protect the fellows against the “vulgarizing and puerile effects” of unsanctioned styles in art, especially the modern, which had clearly emerged triumphant. Rome no longer seemed to occupy a key position in the study of art and architecture.11

This grudging acceptance of “the modern” entailed Rome’s loss of artistic centrality. It was unclear what cultural significance this displaced Rome might possibly have for Americans during the postwar years. With international tourism still largely an elite luxury through the 1960s, Rome’s greatest presence to most Americans was through mass media. Filmmakers redefined the city for global audiences during these years, as when Hollywood used it as a set for *Quo Vadis* (1951), *Roman Holiday* (1953), and *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), all of which heavily promoted their exotic on-location filming. Works by Italian directors, generally distributed in the U.S. as art-house productions, offered far bleaker, anti-touristic images of Rome that emphasized the city’s newly built periphery and a modern reality of desolation and alienation. Unlike the American films, none of these works—most notably De Sica’s *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948) and *Umberto D.* (1952), Fellini’s *Le Notti di Cabiria* (1957) and *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Antonioni’s *L’Eclisse* (1961) and Pasolini’s *Mamma Roma* (1962)—however

powerful as works of art, would perpetuate traditionally romantic associations of the city or promote its enduring cultural relevance. In contrast to its cinematic and propagandistic evocations under Fascism, at most they use its memory as a bitter dramatic foil.\textsuperscript{12}

Thus, Giovannini’s assertion that “during the 1950s, young architects at the Academy felt they were in the wrong place, missing the action back home” rings true to anyone familiar with U.S. postwar history in general, and architectural history in particular. Cold War America enjoyed a frenetic building boom and an architectural resurgence, as triumphant International Style modernism spread from its epicenter on New York’s Park Avenue (halfway between the Lever House and the Seagram Building) to serve and symbolize a capitalist, democratic West. A distant, discredited and supplanted Rome could contribute little to a confident new architectural ethos predicated upon the glass and steel box. In \textit{Native Stone}, a 1956 novel about three young Yale-educated architects, when one protagonist is awarded a travel fellowship he disregards the chairman’s advice to go to Rome. His decision to explore experiments in modern architecture being carried out across the U.S. is ultimately validated by his later success.\textsuperscript{13} Yet another, far more iconic 1950s novel, \textit{The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit}, whose title is a metonym for the bleak, corporate conformism of postwar America housed within those glass boxes, is a New York story set against a background of Rome, as the central character’s wartime experiences in Italy mirror, refract, and ultimately redirect his struggle with the guilt and fear he faces in postwar life.\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, Giovannini’s assumption that postwar architecture Fellows felt they were “missing the action” back home runs counter to most of the evidence I have found.

\textsuperscript{12} Of these films, few depict the historic Rome familiar to tourists as part of its modern urban landscape. \textit{Umberto D.} begins poignantly with its impoverished elderly main character begging on the Pantheon’s portico. \textit{L’Eclisse} deploys the traditional city most extensively, primarily as a counterpoint to the EUR district inhabited by the protagonist Vittoria (Monica Vitti). On Antonioni’s deliberative use of the city, see Jacopo Benci, “Michelangelo’s Rome,” in Richard Wrigley, \textit{Cinematic Rome} (Leicester: Troubador Publishing, 2008).


regarding those architects who were actually at the Academy from 1947-1966. Over fifty American architects came to the Academy in a variety of capacities during these years, none of whom describe feeling duped, isolated, or cut off from their discipline. In a few cases, most notably those of Louis Kahn, Robert Venturi, and Michael Graves, Rome would eventually become a leitmotiv in discussions of their later work. It is their association with the postwar Academy that most strongly established its reputation as the cradle of post-modern historicism.

But as important and prominent as these figures are, their stories are necessarily embedded in another, larger framework. Historically speaking, when Kahn decided to go to the Academy in 1950, Venturi in 1954, and Graves in 1960, they did not, could not go as “proto-post-modernists.” They were modernists, and their decisions and experiences were as much embedded in the complex history of the mid-century discipline as they would be foundational for events in later decades. Giovannini, unconvinced of the Academy’s relevance to modern architects in his own day, assumes it had even less during the postwar years. Yegül considers the postwar Fellows’ anachronistic presence at the Academy as ultimately and fortuitously providential for the institution and the discipline, but never

15 Giovannini does not cite any specific source(s) for this statement. However, to date the records and statements by postwar architects to which I have had access generally support the opposite view.
16 Forty of these earned Rome Prize fellowships in architecture; twelve came as Architects in Residence (along with three who were not U.S. citizens), and three more were “notable visitors.”
inquires why any American architects were in Rome at a time their discipline seemed ill-prepared to value or award their experience.\textsuperscript{18}

My study takes this unasked question as its starting point. After the Beaux-Arts faith in classical aesthetics finally conceded to an ascendant modernism, why would artists and architects keep coming to Rome? For they did indeed keep coming, and continue to do so. The period immediately following the twilight of the Academy’s early history has been glossed over and summarized, but little considered except as a prelude to its postmodern resurgence. The institution and the city somehow survived these years with enough architectural vitality and significance to launch the next wave of italocentrism. By clarifying how a new relationship was forged during these years, I can begin to address further issues: to what extent does the Academy’s architectural role in the late twentieth century represent a deliberate, substantive departure from its past, and how much does it reveal continuity? What contributions, if any, have its affiliated architects made to the discipline’s vision of Rome’s importance and instrumentality, and did these notions affect architectural culture and practice in the U.S. at the height of postwar modernism?

As a pathway into these larger problems I have explored four constitutive issues which are addressed separately in the chapters that follow. Because I have chosen to look most closely where the light of surviving evidence shines brightest, these discussions provide only partial access to many relevant topics, but will hopefully establish an armature for further study. I begin by looking at the Academy itself, the primary institutional anchor for American architectural study in Rome between 1947-1966. I will demonstrate how a few key actors managed to alter the Academy’s direction at a pivotal moment, effectively reorienting the mission of a stodgy, traditionalist but already troubled institution in ways that allowed it

\textsuperscript{18} Since the period of Yegül’s study ends in 1940, this absence is not surprising.
to redefine and re-market itself for an utterly changed cultural climate. While architecture is only one of the many fields of study sponsored by the interdisciplinary Academy, it had always held a special degree of importance within the institution, and during this period would largely carry the burden of signaling its changed artistic ideology to the public.

In the second chapter, I trace part of the cultural response to this new Academy by showing how its altered identity was received by one crucial sector of its intended “market”: the young architects emerging from the country’s design schools. Their desire to apply for and accept the Academy’s fellowships, thereby investing crucial years of their professional development in its mission, was a prerequisite for its continued viability as an architectural institution. I do not claim that those who did so were necessarily representative of their generation as a whole, or dispute the notion that their interest in Rome may have been exceptional rather than typical. However, their identities point to another set of institutions, the nation’s top architectural schools, which charted altered relationships with the new Academy at a time when they too were undergoing dramatic changes. The Fellows’ individual interests, expressed in their application statements, map the ways in which Rome’s architectural relevance was understood and redefined during these years, especially in relation to disciplines such as history and urbanism. They also demonstrate an ongoing determination to construct architectural reasons to go to Rome at a moment when these were not readily apparent.

The Academy’s architectural identity was not only shaped by the young Fellows upon whom it gambled its future identity and prestige. The third chapter will explore how, beginning with its courtship of George Howe in 1947, the Academy pursued a policy of cultivating relationships with established architects whose careers and reputations would enhance its own. The success of its new residency program would vary dramatically from
1947-1966, although by the early 1960s Louis Kahn’s creative resurgence, typically attributed to his now-legendary Academy stay, would greatly increase its luster. Less well-known is the fact that a core of prominent professionals who were all collectively involved in constructing America’s official identity through overseas embassies and cultural institutions also participated in the Academy in varying capacities during these same years. Whether the view from the Janiculum influenced or merely reflected the search for an appropriate architectural expression for the U.S. at the height of the Cold War, this connection is an important and hitherto unexplored aspect of the architectural history of this period.

Finally, the year 1966, which I have chosen to serve as the endpoint of this study, will be discussed in relation to Robert Venturi. He deserves special attention for two reasons: first, because he left one of the fullest and most informative firsthand records of any postwar architecture Fellow’s stay. The second reason is that his return to the Academy as a Resident in 1966 marks a clear turning point in its history, inaugurating a new era of more overt disciplinary relevance and prominence bemoaned by Giovannini and celebrated by Yegül. The ideas that Venturi explored during his fellowship and reworked for years afterwards were originally intended to provide a “gentle” corrective to orthodox modernism, and were heavily indebted to ongoing debates and preoccupations of the 1950s and 1960s. However, they would ultimately help redirect architectural discourse about Rome’s relevance while paving the way to a new era. A history of the Academy from 1966 through the 1980s would necessarily consider a very different set of issues and take place against a disciplinary background very much altered by Venturi.
My exploration of architecture at the postwar Academy has been greatly influenced by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s analyses of the mechanics of cultural power. By now, the application of Bourdieu’s theories to architectural subjects is well established, if uneven in success. But I have found his notions of cultural capital and the habitus to be particularly useful conceptual tools while considering how institutions manufacture and maintain their own prestige, especially in the face of radically changing cultural paradigms. In my view, one of the American Academy’s principal achievements is to have so drastically redefined the fifty-year old Rome Prize in architecture in 1947 while preserving, even enhancing its prestige over the long run. Occurring at a time when the cause of modern architecture was becoming assimilated into “academies” of varying sorts in the U.S. and around the globe, this raises many further questions (which I will not pretend to resolve here) about the disciplinary mechanics of architecture. Despite its aspirations to artistic autonomy and participation in the avant-garde, this lingering attachment to Rome suggests an unshakable core of conventionalism, of conservatism, and implication in the power structures that ultimately support all forms of professional practice. It is significant that Thomas Larson described the long-term advantages of his 1960s fellowship as twofold: first, as a contribution to his “design sense,” evoking the city’s expected aesthetic and inspirational value; the other, as providing a professional “edge,” or a more advantageous competitive position within his field. Are these two benefits separable? Is it possible to be inspired by Rome qua Rome, without one’s motives and reactions being tainted and colored by what a

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“love of Rome” communicates to an audience about one’s worldly sophistication and cultivated aesthetic sensitivity?

These questions haunt the legacy of those who over the course of two decades contributed to the successful transformation of a musty institution, helping it shake off its retardataire image while retaining sufficient continuity of identity to justify keeping its name. They also inflect the countless individual decisions by architects (and architectural historians) to embrace Rome in countless ways—through research topics, study abroad, design ideas, casual tourism, framed images, book collections, romantic nostalgia. Giovannini very rightly perceived that to accept an invitation from the American Academy is to enter into one of the most emphatically capitalized Western “Traditions” of all: the voyage of countless emperors, apostles, pilgrims, antiquarians, artists, and tourists—Grand and less-grand—to the Eternal City. But his concern that young designers will become subsumed by the Academy’s conservative influence and cease to be “modern” does not do justice to the example or the fuller vision of Rome presented by Le Corbusier, in which the city looms, Janus-faced, as a perilous challenge to authentic architectural creativity while simultaneously, paradoxically holding out the promise of inspiration and achievement on the divine scale of Michelangelo. To own tradition without being owned by it—to tame the monstrous city that has devoured centuries of architects and channel its enormity to one’s own purposes—is to attain an enviable position of power and freedom. It remains a tantalizing prospect.

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21 For another modern architect’s identification of his Italian travels with this tradition, see “Interview with Peter Eisenman: The Last Grand Tourist: Travels with Colin Rowe,” in *Grand Tour: Perspecta* 41 (2008): 131-139.
Chapter 1: A Modern Academy

Crisis and the Credo

A minor crisis shook the American Academy in Rome in early 1926. It took the form of a disagreement between Frank Fairbanks, Professor-in-Charge of the Academy’s School of Fine Arts from 1922-1932, and Charles Rufus Morey, Professor-in-Charge of the School of Classical Studies for 1925-26. These two men had a difference of opinion regarding one of the Collaborative Projects produced by teams of Fine Arts fellows. The dispute prompted Fairbanks to provide Morey with a copy of a document known as the “Credo” and request his comments. The Credo was a document drafted in 1924 by C. Grant LaFarge, architect and member of the Academy’s Board of Trustees from 1909-38. It was originally written in response to a problem evident in a number of fine arts projects arriving for judgment in New York in the early 1920s. In the opinion of the Academy Trustees, certain works showed a disturbing degree of influence from modern art movements, rather than the sort of inspiration they should be drawing from Rome. In order to counter this trend, LaFarge explicitly outlined the fundamental tenets of the institution which young artists joined upon acceptance of the Rome Prize:

The American Academy in Rome is founded upon a settled belief….that in the arts of classic antiquity and their derivatives, down to and including the major Renaissance period, are contained the fundamental principles upon which all great art so far known and proven is based;

1 While the American Academy in Rome was at that time divided administratively into these two separate “schools,” it has always been a non-degree granting institution sponsoring postgraduate work. For detailed information on Fairbanks and Morey’s relationships with the Academy (along with dozens of others), see their respective entries in Kohl, Linker, and Kaveman, eds., Centennial Directory of the American Academy in Rome (New York and Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1995).

2 An account of this incident is presented as part of the history of architecture at the American Academy in Rome prior to World War II in Fikret K. Yegül in Gentlemen of Instinct and Breeding: Architecture at the American Academy, 1894-1940 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Yegül’s well-documented history of the Academy’s first decades provides foundational analysis of the key events and issues that defined the institution’s prewar phase, which are summarized here to set the stage for its postwar history.
That these arts are closely and inseparably interrelated and interdependent; that in the days when they attained their noblest expression this interrelation was manifested by a common understanding and practice, by collaboration, since largely vanished, which should be re-established to the greatest possible extent;

That the greatest comprehension of these principles will again be gained by actual residence upon the very theater of their past performance, before the background against which moved the artists who established and bequeathed to us those principles, and that residence should be made the occasion for acquiring mutual sympathy and understanding, and for the tangible practice of collaboration…

That the field to which the Academy limits its students is so vast, so richly fruitful, as to give all needful scope to the student in the matter of design, and that the three years of residence should be exclusively devoted to the study of that field.³

The Credo ends by affirming magnanimously that, after three years under the Academy’s watchful guidance, its young artists are free to “elect as they will the manner in which they shall contribute to the civilization of their country.” However, the vision of Rome’s artistic significance presented by LaFarge is strictly delineated in order to prevent undue influence by styles which are conceived as intrinsically inferior—namely medieval, baroque, or modern art.⁴ These principles mirror the precepts of the Beaux-Arts academicism that gave birth to the Academy in 1894, and which reached its apex of power in the U.S. in the 1920s.⁵

The artistic philosophy presented in the Credo was wholeheartedly supported and implemented by Fairbanks, and contributed to the relative stability and consistency of artistic production at the Academy during the 1920s. A letter from Morey to Fairbanks documents his own,

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⁴ In contrast, the original proposal written by the founders of the British School at Rome (classicists all) emphasizes Rome’s desirability as a site because of the breadth of studies that could be supported there: “It is therefore not only to those who are interested in classical history or archaeology that the proposed School should be of service, but equally to students of Christian Antiquities, of Mediaeval History, of Palaeography, and of Italian Art.” The history of the BSR by director Andrew Wallace-Hadrill outlines an institution led primarily by humanists rather than artists; see The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years (Rome: The British School at Rome, 2001), p. 21.

quite different, opinion of the Credo. In it, Morey diplomatically presents a more nuanced attitude towards style and artistic education:

[Historians of art] would say that in the arts of classical antiquity, etc., are contained the fundamental principles of what may be called the ideal and intellectual mode of artistic expression, but they would certainly not subscribe to the proposition that all great art is comprised within that mode. If we leave out Asiatic art and the intrusions thereof into Europe, we certainly still have two modes of artistic expression which have developed in Europe alone, one the classic, intellectual, ideal mode mentioned above, and the other the Gothic, intuitive, realistic mode. The belief on which the Academy is founded assumes that Gothic architecture is not great art, nor the painting of the Dutch, nor what is most vital in the Italian fifteenth century….The historians of art would, I think, also hold it to be true that what is vital in modern art is derived rather from the realistic mode than the classic.

If the “statement of principles” read thus: “that in the arts of classic antiquity and their derivatives, etc., are contained the fundamental principles upon which all effective technical education and discipline for artistic practice is based,” I should cheerfully subscribe to that. However one may admire the Gothic realistic mode, its very intuitive spontaneity makes it a dangerous mode for purposes of discipline. If the Academy is conceived as a school of discipline, and not as a milieu provided for the free play of creative instinct, I think that its single-minded adherence to the classical ideal is a position well-taken. In any case, the Academy has, so long as it is a private foundation, the right to take any aesthetic position it pleases.6

Morey managed to outline the most coherent argument that could be made in support of the Credo, and then to demonstrate precisely why a reasonable person might find it objectionable. Implicit in the right of the Academy to “take any aesthetic position it pleases” is also the right of a private individual, such as Morey, to have his own opinions about other forms, styles, and periods of art.

The key point of disagreement was, unfortunately, the most fundamental point of the Credo: whether there exists any “settled belief” establishing any “proven” definition of “all great art.”

Both Morey and Fairbanks could claim longstanding associations with the Academy. Fairbanks had been a Fellow in painting at the Academy from 1909-12, and Morey had been a Fellow in the American School of Classical Studies in Rome (which had since become part of the

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6 Letter, Charles Rufus Morey to Frank Fairbanks, 4 February 1926, AAR Records, AAA [Reel 5756: 463-464]. Although the Academy was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1905 it has always been a privately funded and administered organization, in contrast to all other “national” academies in Rome (of which the Académie Française de Rome, founded in 1666, is the most preeminent).
Academy) in 1903. However, while Fairbanks’ career was largely constructed within the confines of the American Academy itself, Morey was a highly respected scholar of international reputation.

Professor of Art History at Princeton, Morey’s primary fields of specialization were late antique, early Christian, and medieval art, although his published writings included subjects as far removed as American art. With a professional interest in periods of art considered either entirely non-classical or only tangentially so, it is hardly surprising that Morey might not accept as “proven” the assertion that all great art belongs to the classical tradition. By virtue of his study of the liminal period of late antiquity, Morey was also exceptionally well-prepared to question the fundamental nature and boundaries of such an artistic category.

The project which presumably prompted the original disagreement between Fairbanks and Morey featured numerous “Gothic” details, about which they would have had predictably divergent opinions. This conflict also reveals the immense distance separating the worlds of the humanities and the arts at the Academy, despite their shared quarters and administration. Morey’s disagreement

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9 Morey (1877-1955) founded the *Index of Christian Art* (currently an indispensable online resource for scholars in the field). His major published works include *Lost Mosaics and Frescoes of Rome of the Medieval Period* (1915); *The American Spirit in Art* (with Frank Jewett Mather and William James Henderson, 1927); *The Landevenne Gospels. A Breton Illuminated Manuscript of the Ninth Century* (1929); *Christian Art* (1935); *The Mosaics of Antioch* (1938); *Medieval Art* (1942); and *Early Christian Art: An Outline of the Evolution of Style and Iconography in Sculpture and Painting from Antiquity to the Eighth Century* (1953). For an overview of Morey’s career and significance to the discipline of art history in the U.S., see the obituary by Francis Henry Taylor, “Charles Rufus Morey, 1877-1955,” *College Art Journal* 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1955): 139-142.

10 Yegül convincingly identifies the design by the team of Douglas, Bradford, and Hancock as the likely culprit in this disagreement. See *Gentlemen*, p. 82, and plate 12.
with the central tenets of the Credo was quickly and anxiously reported to the Academy’s President, architect William Rutherford Mead of the firm of McKim, Mead and White in New York. But while the sting of his critique was felt acutely, its only immediate effect was to underscore the School of Fine Arts’ determination to hold its ideological ground. Academy Director William Gorham Stevens wrote to Mead that “the School of Classical Studies will have to pass over our dead bodies before the ideas and the traditions of the original founders will be departed from!”¹¹ In this, as in much else, the School of Fine Arts had the President’s full support.

The Academy of the 1920s was an interdisciplinary institution, supporting fellowships in the classics and archaeology, painting, sculpture, landscape architecture, and music.¹² However, the institution had originally been founded in 1894 as the American School of Architecture in Rome. Renamed the American Academy in Rome in 1897, it added fellowships in painting and sculpture, and merged with the American School of Classical Studies in Rome in 1913. Henceforth, the Academy organized itself into its two separate “schools” of Fine Arts and Classical Studies administered by a single Academy Director.¹³ But separate does not appear to have been equal: from 1917-1940, all of those Directors were architects.¹⁴ In addition, from its founding in 1894 until 1958, all of the Presidents of the Academy’s Board of Trustees were architects, giving the interests of

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¹¹ Letter, Gorham P. Stevens to William R. Mead, 20 March 1926, AAR Records, AAA [5756: 462]. Yegül notes that in this letter Stevens took pains to clarify that Morey was not a “Professor of Art” but of the “History of Art,” implying that as a non-artist he could have no authority in such matters; Gentlemen, p. 84. Stevens also mentions Princeton’s increasingly “Mediaeval” leanings, and states that he and Fairbanks would support a separate “Gothic School with [Ralph Adams] Cram at its head” in Rome over medievalist influence on the Academy.

¹² The first fellow in sculpture came in 1895, the first painter in 1896, and the first landscape architect in 1917. Fellowships in musical composition were added in 1921; see A. & L. Valentine, Academy, p. 21-24; 86-87.

¹³ Published dates for the unification of the Academy with the School of Classical Studies range from 1912-1917. However, this took place officially on January 1, 1913; see Yegül, Gentlemen, p. 17 and Valentines and Valentine, Academy, p. 13.

¹⁴ The last Director of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome from 1907-1913, classicist Jesse Benedict Carter, was the first to hold this position from 1913-1917. This job was originally intended for artist and journalist Frank Millet, who perished during the Titanic’s maiden voyage, on April 14, 1912. His early death (at age 46) led to the appointment of Stevens. The Valentines describe the uncomfortable relationship between Stevens and Carter, marked by much institutional confusion, in Academy, p. 61-75. The next architect to serve as the Academy’s director was Richard A. Kimball from 1960-65.
architecture and the fine arts even greater representation.\textsuperscript{15} The notion that classicists would be welcome at the Academy only if they did not interfere with its core artistic mission dates as far back as 1895, when the earliest proponents for a School of Classical Studies in Rome suggested affiliation with the nascent American School of Architecture in Rome. McKim was in favor of this association “in all ways except that of any step which might menace our independence as a school later; in other words our relation to other bodies joining us should be that of landlord and tenant.”\textsuperscript{16}

Fairbanks’ and Stevens’ defensive posture in the face of Morey’s unwillingness to subscribe to the Credo reflects both an aesthetic dogma shared by the Academy’s School of Fine Arts, its Director, and its President, and a longstanding institutional vision of the Academy as a bulwark of classicism, defending the true faith against even the infidels under their own roof. This stubborn determination to hold onto the Academy’s original artistic \textit{raison d’être} would be tested during the 1930s, as more and more Fellows would arrive “tainted with the puerile aspects of Modernism.”\textsuperscript{17} The broadening influence of European avant-garde movements was more than a minor administrative annoyance for the Academy. It constituted a fundamental threat to the cultural mission it had defined for itself in 1894, and to which it had confidently reasserted its allegiance in 1924 through the Credo. But one decade later, the threat of cultural irrelevance would become harder to ignore.

During the 1930s it became increasingly clear that the twin pillars upon which the Academy had been established—classical style and artistic interdependence—conflicted directly with its other stated goals for the arts: nurturing the best young artists and launching them on the sort of

\textsuperscript{15} The first five Presidents of the Academy were Charles Follen McKim (1894-1909), William Rutherford Mead (1910-28); Charles Platt (1929-33), John Russell Pope (1933-38); and James Kellum Smith (1938-1958). See their respective entries in Kohl, et al., \textit{Centennial Directory}.

\textsuperscript{16} Letter, Charles F. McKim to William Ware, n.d. [ca. 1895-96], cited in A. & L. Valentine, \textit{Academy}, p. 15. This letter is not among those preserved in the Academy’s microfilm records at the Archives of American Art, nor is it among Ware’s papers at either MIT or Columbia University’s Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library. For a short time, the ASCSR was literally a tenant of the Academy at the Villa Aurora, a short-lived and less than satisfactory arrangement for the classicists.

\textsuperscript{17} Fairbanks’ comment about a newly arrived fellow in 1928, cited in Yegül, \textit{Gentlemen}, p. 85.
prominent careers that would provide continued *post facto* justification for the Academy’s philosophy and mission.

As has been the case in the conflict between Fairbanks and Morey, the source of contention was the Collaborative Problem.\(^\text{18}\) This annual, prescribed competitive project for assigned teams of students carried the burden of demonstrating the validity and vitality of the Academy’s artistic mission to its administration and benefactors. But the projects submitted between 1930-1933 were all found to be unacceptable. Either too bold in departing from the catalog of sanctioned styles or too timid in emulating approved models, none were considered worthy of an award during these years.\(^\text{19}\) Fellowships in architecture and landscape architecture were reduced from three years to two in 1931, soon followed by similar reductions for those in painting and sculpture.\(^\text{20}\)

These changes not only reflected Depression-era finances, but additionally suggested a profound loss of faith in the Academy’s mission. In 1935 its newly appointed Director, architect and Trustee Chester Holmes Aldrich, even solicited advice on how to redefine the Academy’s art education policies—an enormous change from the defensive posture exhibited in 1926. Aldrich invited Henri Marceau (FAAR 1922-25, architecture), Assistant Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to assess the professional success of recent arts fellows and “put down on paper the suggestions you made concerning the future of the American Academy in Rome.”\(^\text{21}\) Marceau noted

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18 The *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like ideal of synthesized architecture, painting and sculpture was a central value of the American Beaux-Arts, exemplified by such works as McKim, Mead & White’s Boston Public Library (1887-95). See Richard Guy Wilson, “The Great Civilization” in *The American Renaissance 1876-1917* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1979).
19 Yegül, who provides thorough discussion of this period in *Gentlemen*, p. 87-101, writes that no Collaborative Problems were assigned for 1934 or 1935, but a preserved document shows that one was assigned during these years (with generally unsatisfactory results): see Committee of the School of Fine Arts, “Report on Collaborative Problems,” 21 Nov. 1935, Reel 5772: 1192, AAR Records, AAA. Solutions to the Collaborative Problems for 1936-39 generally employed tepid Art Deco or Stripped Classical styles. The Academy’s era of stylistic orthodoxy had clearly ended.
20 A. & L. Valentine, *Academy*, p. 95. It is noteworthy that even in this history, produced under the institution’s auspices, the authors write of the early 1930s that “It began to seem inevitable that the [artistic] requirements established by the Academy would have to be made more flexible or possibly abolished altogether” (p. 93).
21 Letters, Chester H. Aldrich to Henri Marceau, 31 January 1935 and 2 April 1935, AAR Records, AAA [5772: 1213, 1234]. Marceau was being considered for a position as Assistant Director in Rome at the time. He would later serve as the museum’s director from 1956-64; see his entry in Kohl, et. al., *Centennial Directory*. His report noted that only two
the low representation of Academy-affiliated artists in major national exhibitions, and proposed that the Academy transform itself into an intellectually and creatively progressive “Fine Arts Research Institute” which would sponsor independent research projects in the arts and humanities without setting a priori limits on periods, styles, or travel destinations. 22 Although the Academy had invited Marceau’s suggestions, their only apparent effect was a looser attitude towards style, seen in the acceptance of Art Deco and stripped classical architectural designs consistent with mainstream architecture of the 1930s.

During World War II, in which the U.S. and Fascist Italy fought on opposite sides, the Academy closed its doors in Rome for the first time in its history. The Academy awarded special wartime fellowships for travel, study, and creative work in the U.S. and accessible international locations. 23 But the war held the institution, like much of America, in abeyance in more than a practical sense. The Academy had been presented with much evidence supporting the need for profound and essential changes, but whether because of denial, a lingering hope that the cultural pendulum might swing back its way, or simple institutional inertia, it had not yet managed to accept and implement any substantial reforms by 1940. The Academy’s future artistic relevance to a vaguely imagined postwar world must have appeared uncertain.

**War and Renewal**

After May 9, 1945, when Germany surrendered to the Allies and the war in Europe officially ended, the Academy faced the task of reopening and resuming its activities in Rome. The Allies had
occupied the city since June of 1944, and the Academy was extremely fortunate in that all of its properties in the city had survived the war largely intact. That this was true, despite the buildings’ highly strategic location on the Janiculum overlooking the embattled city, was due largely to the protection and intervention of the Swiss Embassy and the Vatican during the war.

Despite this enviable practical advantage, the Academy was burdened by a consciousness that its original cultural mission was exhausted, and it faced an acute need to define its future role. In 1945, the Board of Trustees began another, even more broad and extensive review the Academy’s policies, those of the School of Fine Arts in particular. The trustee most involved with this process was Eric Gugler (TAAR 1938-1967), consulting architect for the White House in Washington D.C. from 1934-48, and one of the minority of board members serving both before 1940 and after 1947. Unsurprisingly, architecture appears to have been the discipline of greatest importance and greatest concern during this process. Gugler’s communications with select alumni and the deans of prominent architecture schools apparently produced a range of suggestions for the School, from those in favor of little or no change to the proposal that “men like Saarinen, Aalto, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies Van Der Rohe and Le Corbusier [should]…visit the Academy to stimulate the Fellows.”

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24 The Academy owns a roughly eleven-acre site on the Janiculum. Its properties include the Villa Aurelia, the Main Building by McKim, Mead and White, the Villa Bellacci, the Villa Richardson, and the Villa Chiaraviglio. The Villa Aurelia (largely rebuilt in the 19th century and bequeathed to the Academy by its American owner in 1909) had been a garden casino for the Medici, and had served as a headquarters for Garibaldi during the siege of 1849.

25 The Academy’s Rome facilities were closed, maintained by a skeleton staff, with only the library open for limited scholarly access. Numerous attempts were made to occupy them by both Italian and German forces. Its facilities were offered for partial, temporary use to the U.S. Embassy and occupying forces, who housed selected staff there from around 1944-1946. For a detailed account of this period of the Academy’s wartime and immediate postwar history, see A. & L. Valentine, *Academy*, p. 94-110.

26 Gugler (1889-1974) oversaw expansion of the West Wing and other major renovations to the White House during the 1930s and 40s.

27 This suggestion was made by Olindo Grossi (FAAR 1934-36, Architecture), at that time Dean of the School of Architecture at the Pratt Institute. Letter of January 8, 1945 to Trustee Eric Gugler, cited by Yegül, *Gentlemen*, p. 120. Although Yegül notes that Grossi’s suggestion “did not come to pass,” the participation of at least one of these men, Eero Saarinen, would be actively sought in the 1950s; see Chapter 3 below.
Yet unlike the previous instances of 1926 and 1935, when suggestions of change were met with alarm and inertia, respectively, the outcome of these inquiries was action. The wartime hiatus presented an opportunity to decisively redefine the Academy’s relationship to the arts. It is clear that the board (which underwent substantial turnover between 1940-47) largely accepted the more radical of the visions proposed for the postwar Academy.\footnote{The Board of Trustees saw a turnover of about half during the war years. Of the 31 members serving in 1940 (one of whom had served since 1909, three others since 1911), only twelve remained as part of the 1947 board of 25. Although Kohl, et al. simply provide cumulative lists of current, emeritus, and past board members in the Centennial Directory, I have reconstructed the board’s composition for this periods of dramatic change by correlating the names with dates of service from individual entries.} The policy changes implemented had the cumulative effect of realizing the suggestions proposed by Marceau (who resubmitted his 1935 report in 1945) and genuinely transforming the institution from a “school of discipline” into the “milieu provided for the free play of creative instinct” proposed by Morey in 1926. It cannot be coincidental that Morey himself was appointed the Academy’s Acting Director in 1945, at the same time when its basic arts policies came under examination.\footnote{See the obituary by Francis Henry Taylor, “Charles Rufus Morey, 1877-1955,” College Art Journal 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1955): 139-142. Morey accepted early retirement from Princeton to accept the Acting Directorship of the AAR in 1945, which he held until Laurence Roberts was able to assume office in October 1946. He remained in Rome, serving the State Department as a cultural attaché until 1952, serving as “a latter-day Winckelmann,” moderating disputes over claims to art works, and also supervising the return of archaeological libraries stolen by the Nazis to their original owners.} While many changes implemented after the war could be traced to earlier suggestions from a number of figures, by selecting one of its earliest internal critics to manage its return to activity the Academy manifested a new acceptance of the more liberal spirit of his earlier analysis.

Some of these changes affected both the Schools of Classical Studies and of Fine Arts, such as those altering the traditional eligibility rules for the Rome Prize. Previously limited to unmarried candidates below the age of thirty, both restrictions were now ended, although fellows were still meant to be “emerging” rather than “established” in their respective fields.\footnote{This decision included permission for families to reside with fellows at the Academy, although after an experimental period those with children would be housed in separate quarters (see A&L Valentine, Academy, p. 110). However, exceptions to the marriage rule had long been made, and occasional fellowships were awarded to married candidates before 1940. In fact, Hermon MacNeil, the very first Fellow in sculpture in 1895, got married soon after he won his}
fellowships was reduced to one year, with the option of renewal for a second year upon request.\textsuperscript{31} This greater flexibility increased the suitability of the Rome Prize to the sociological realities of America in the late 1940s, after the war had caused an entire generation to postpone and then accelerate educations, families, and careers.

The Academy also altered what had been a highly stratified administrative structure in Rome. In practice, fellows had been clearly subordinate to the schools’ respective professors, despite the fact the Rome Prize has always supported “independent” postgraduate work. The School of Classical Studies did return to the prewar practice of appointing a Professor-in-Charge, but it also converted two of its five fellowships in Classical Studies and Archaeology to postdoctoral prizes.\textsuperscript{32} In the School of Fine Arts, an entirely new program took the place of a supervising professorship. Short-term residencies were to be offered to established figures from among the fields represented at the Academy, which in the case of the arts was deemed to be a sufficient source of supervision and guidance. More than ever before, then, to be at the Academy as a Rome Prize Fellow after 1947 was to join a community of scholars and artists at multiple, varying points of their careers, a mixture supporting relationships that promised to be more collegial than hierarchical.

The end of the previously paternalistic relationship between the Academy and the fellows was also evident in further changes.\textsuperscript{33} A new fellowship was added in art history, which opened up three-year award. Since his award was from a separate foundation that assigned him to Rome (i.e., a “free fellow”), the AAR relented and permitted Mr. and Mrs. MacNeil to reside at the Academy during his stay. (Valentines, p. 21-22). In his discussion of prewar gender separation at the Academy, Yegül mentions that “a separate dining room was set aside for women who were fellows of the School of Classical Studies or who were married to fellows of either school...” (\textit{Gentlemen}, p. 19). The policies of the British School at Rome provide an interesting parallel: at the BSR it was not marital status \textit{per se} that was regulated, but spousal residency. Initially, married Scholars were required to reside outside the School. Spouses of BSR Scholars were officially accepted into residence in 1926; see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years} (London: The British School at Rome, 2001), p. 73.

\textsuperscript{31} A. & L. Valentine, \textit{Academy}, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{32} Frank E. Brown of Yale held this position from 1947-1952, during which he supervised the archaeological excavations at Cosa in central Italy. See Kohl, et al., \textit{Centennial Directory}, p. 385.
\textsuperscript{33} The paternalistic spirit evident in the early Academy seems to reflect McKim’s wish that he himself could have benefited from such guidance: for a young architect to “spend any part of [his] time elsewhere than as mapped out in the course, is to spend it among things beautiful but of less consequence, and which if never seen it were better to lose. I
all periods (even the previously “dangerous” ones like the Medieval or the Baroque) to study and meant that historical research at the Academy would no longer end with the fall of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{34} The loosening of control over the fellows is even more evident in a set of changes that only affected the School of Fine Arts. Prior to the war, only muralists—practicing in a medium inextricable from architecture—were eligible for fellowships in painting, reflecting the Academy’s longstanding commitment to the “interdependence of the arts” outlined in the Credo.\textsuperscript{35} Along with the elimination of the long-contentious Collaborative Problem, the Academy now accepted easel painters, thereby bestowing upon all its artistic disciplines the complete creative autonomy previously enjoyed only by fellows in Musical Composition.\textsuperscript{36}

An even more significant change from a sociological perspective is the decision (described as “startling” in 1973) to admit female candidates for fellowships in the Fine Arts.\textsuperscript{37} Contrasting attitudes toward women had been one of many points of divergence between the arts and the classics.\textsuperscript{38} Women’s colleges and female scholars had become part of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome (ASCSR) soon after its foundation as a separate institution in 1896.\textsuperscript{39} The

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\textsuperscript{34} While the Renaissance had been considered a suitable era for stylistic emulation by Fine Arts fellows, it was not permitted to be the subject of scholarly research within the School of Classical Studies. The “Classical Studies” label would later become the “Humanities.” The Art History fellowship had first been proposed by Director Chester Aldrich in the 1930s (A. & L. Valentine, \textit{Academy}, p. 114). In 1957, a fellowship in Post-Classical/Humanistic Studies was added as well.

\textsuperscript{35} The prewar insistence that all paintings be executed on a built wall is further evidence of the traditionally privileged place of architecture at the Academy.

\textsuperscript{36} Although the Collaborative Problem ended as an official requirement at the Academy, the Academy’s alumni association continued to sponsor collaborative design competitions during the war years and for several years thereafter. These competitions and the winning teams were announced in major architecture journals such as \textit{Architectural Record} [104 (Dec. 1948): 164], \textit{Architectural Forum} [89 (Dec. 1948): 56], \textit{Pencil Points} [vol. 24 (March 1943): 86] and its successor \textit{Progressive Architecture} [vol. 29 (April 1948): 18]. Records of these competitions are also held in the Archives of the American Academy in Rome in New York.

\textsuperscript{37} A. & L. Valentine, \textit{Academy}, 108.

\textsuperscript{38} Disciplinary (and gendered) suspicion and antipathy could extend in both directions. In a letter by architect Sir Edward Lutyens, designer of the British School at Rome’s building on the Pincian Hill, he notes that BSR classicist Eugénie Strong objected to his design because “she thinks our School is going to be too big for her and she is terrified of the rough architectural students.” Cited by Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{The British School at Rome}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{39} The first listed female fellow at the ASCSR is Mabel Douglas Reid of 1901. Some of the most important American scholars of ancient Rome from the early twentieth-century are women who participated in the ASCSR and the Academy.
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Academy’s chauvinism, while perfectly consistent with the mainstream professional world of fin-de-siècle and early twentieth-century architectural practice, contributed significantly to the delay in its unification with the ASCSR. The eventual compromise was to allow women fellows in the School of Classical Studies only, and to carefully circumscribe their presence spatially. Female fellows were only allowed into the Main Building’s library, and were required to lodge and dine separately from the men, an arrangement that endured until the war. A report outlining the inadequacy of current lodging provisions for women was submitted to the Academy in 1939, noting that one of the two female Fellows that year was being housed in quarters originally assigned to the housekeeper, and describing their allotted dining room as an “unattractive dark room.” While that report simply advocating expanding and improving the spaces available for their use, the possible expansion of the Academy’s female population was one of the issues discussed during the 1945 policy review. Vittorio Giannini, a music fellow from 1936 who seems to have otherwise favored the admission of women to the School of Fine Arts, insisted that “women must eat separately” or that “men must have, at least, one meal together.” Gendered meals were apparently still considered to have a symbolic, seemingly sacred weight in fostering artistic development and fraternity.

That such opinions were voiced by the supporters of women’s admission makes it unsurprising that the choice to formally allow women admission into the School of Fine Arts as a

Esther B. Van Deman (FASCSR 1909), Lily Ross Taylor (FAAR 1918), Marion Elizabeth Blake (FAAR 1925), and Inez Scott Ryberg (FAAR 1926), to name only a few.


41 During the short tenure of classicist Jesse Carter as Academy Director from 1913-1917, he sought to arrange for appropriate housing for female scholars and to begin admitting women to the School of Fine Arts, both of which were refused by the Trustees. See A. & L. Valentine, Academy, p. 66. Yegül discusses the gender issues relating to the ASCSR and the AAR in Gentlemen, p. 17-21.


43 See Gentlemen, p. 234, n. 8.
matter of policy would be carried out very slowly in practice. Until the 1970s, when women became more visibly involved in all aspects of the Academy (including the first to serve on the Board of Trustees), women would receive only a handful of Rome Prize fellowships in the arts. However, the official end to gendered segregation and the welcoming of spouses (usually wives) into the Academy community created a larger female presence and community for those who did come (fig. 1.1). It also broke down one more formal division between the worlds of the arts and the humanities, furthering the interdisciplinary ideal.

This new spirit of openness is most fully expressed in the most aesthetically fundamental change to the School of Fine Arts: the end of any assigned work or official limitations on the styles, topics, or locations to be studied by fellows. While the prewar selection process for fellows in architecture had employed a Beaux-Arts style design competition, from 1947 on applicants were asked to submit a statement of purpose outlining how they planned to use their year in Rome, along with recommendations and examples of prior work. Once in Rome, they were essentially free to use their time as they wished, with the only practical constraint being whether they wished to contribute work to the Academy’s Annual Exhibition, held each spring. The Academy’s only direct exercise of authority was in accepting or refusing any requests that fellowships be renewed for a second year. Beyond that, the fellows were completely independent, free to use or squander their Rome Prize as they wished.

44 The first woman to receive a fellowship in the arts was sculptor Concetta Scaravaglione (FAAR 1950). Those in other fields were architect Astra Zarina (FAAR 1960), painter Marjorie Kreilick (FAAR 1963), composer Barbara Ann Kolb (FAAR 1971) and landscape architect Joanna Dougherty (FAAR 1986). The first woman appointed to the Board of Trustees was Phyllis W. G. Jordan in 1971. The question of the Academy’s racial attitudes is equally significant: in early 1951, Roberts mentions being impressed by a candidate for a fellowship in Classics, whom he describes as “a Negro who has the highest recommendations from Pennsylvania and Harvard. I have seen [him] and find him quiet, well spoken, and naturally very well trained in the field.” (Letter, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 16 February 1951, AAR Records, AAA, [5759: 996]). It is unclear whether this unnamed applicant was among the Rome Prize winners in classics for 1951-2. African-American author Ralph Ellison was at the Academy in 1957 as a fellow in Literature, an honor conferred by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

45 An exception to this was the year 1949, in which, according to Spero Daltas (FAAR 1949-52) a design competition was once again used, being won by himself and Dale Claude Byrd (FAAR 1949-51). The competition drawing prepared by David Leavitt (FAAR 1950-51) is held with his papers at the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania.
A decision that was both consistent with this new, liberal philosophy and a contributing factor in its realization was the selection of Laurance Roberts (1908-2002) to succeed Morey as the Academy’s new director, a position he assumed in late 1946 and held until 1960. Along with his wife Isabel, Roberts helped establish the Academy’s postwar reputation as a culturally and intellectually rich and stimulating environment (1.2-1.3). The Valentines explicitly credit both of the Roberts for raising the Academy to “a position of eminence, both here and abroad, unsurpassed since its founding...by following, not a restrictive course but—far more difficult—a course of enlightened artistic liberalism.”  

The Roberts’ residence at the Academy’s Villa Aurelia was christened “the second American embassy” by more than one source.

Laurance Roberts had been Director of the Brooklyn Museum of Art from 1938-1942, and Isabel Roberts had occupied this position in his stead during his military service in Army intelligence from 1942-1946. Laurance Roberts’ primary curatorial and art historical experience was as an Asianist. Since most prior directors had either been architects, painters, or classicists, this marks a significant departure from a prewar vision of Rome as the caput mundi and emphasis on continuing the most Eurocentric of cultural traditions. The narrow vision of Rome’s cultural relevance that had defined the Academy’s first half-century would be replaced by a much broader outlook, one...

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46 This praise of the Roberts is found in a letter by former Academy President James K. Smith, cited in A. & L. Valentine, *Academy*, p. 117. The spirit of this period is essentially equated with their administration, particularly in the over 200 letters of dismay and affection which they received after word of their tenure’s imminent end became public in 1959. See “Correspondence 1959 Re: Resignation from AAR,” Laurance and Isabel Roberts Papers, 1910-2005, Berenson Library Archives, Villa I Tatti.

47 These include the Valentines (*Academy*, p. 111) and architecture fellow James Jarrett (1957-59): who wrote in a 1978 letter to the Academy: “During the time of … Lawrence Roberts, the Academy, in fact, acted as a surrogate cultural center for the State Department.” Letter, James Jarrett to Thomas R. Vreeland, Jr., 14 November, 1978; Fellows Files: Jarrett, James A., 1957-59, AAR Archives. The Academy’s role in international politics and diplomacy shall be discussed further in Chapter 3.


50 Of course, the image of openness serves to re-establish Rome’s centrality, a point to which I shall return.
which would be immediately signaled by an embrace of one of its most reviled cultural enemies: modern architecture.

**Modern Architecture: George Howe, Philip Johnson and MoMA**

When Frederic S. Coolidge accepted the Rome Prize in architecture for 1947, he asked Academy Secretary Mary Williams to confirm an issue of great importance to him: whether architect George Howe would be at the Academy as well (fig. 1.4).\(^{51}\) The promise of Howe’s presence in Rome apparently played a significant part in Coolidge’s decision to accept his Rome Prize. This was by design: public association with George Howe was a public assertion that the Academy’s relationship to architecture in 1947 would be defined in utterly new terms. And while architecture was only one of the five artistic fields supported by the postwar School of Fine Arts – architecture, landscape architecture, painting, sculpture, and musical composition – it was arguably still the most important.\(^{52}\)

The presidency of the Academy’s Board of Trustees remained in the hands of New York-based architects from its founding in 1894 until 1958 (when it crossed the great disciplinary divide to a New York-based landscape architect, Michael Rapuano).\(^{53}\) The 1940 board of thirty-one members included seven architects, one landscape architect, four visual artists, and three musicians, while

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51 Letter, Frederic S. Coolidge, to Mary T. Williams on 28 May 1947; Fellows Files: Coolidge, Frederic S., 1947-48; AAR Archives. It appears that Coolidge was not the only one interested in confirming Howe’s presence in Rome. In a Rome Prize announcement in the April 1948 *J.A.I.A.*, the Academy specifically mentions that “George Howe, who left for Rome on March sixteenth” is on his way (p. 158). Because Howe’s residency occurred much later in the year than originally expected (March 1948 rather than October 1947), this announcement suggests the Academy was responding to skepticism about Howe’s actual presence in Rome, which underscores the importance of his involvement.

52 Fine Arts Fellowships in Literature would begin with Anthony Heckt in 1950-51, and were administered by the National Academy of Letters. See A. & L. Valentine, *Academy*, p. 114.

53 Rapuano, a trustee from 1947-74, served as President from 1958-69; s.v., Kohl, et al., *Centennial Directory*. 
seven classicists represented the other disciplinary “half” of the Academy. By 1947, the twenty-four member board had five architects and six members from the other arts, but only four classicists. This stands in contrast to what is probably the Academy’s most comparable cultural institution, the British School at Rome (founded 1901). The British School, founded largely through the efforts of classicists Thomas Ashby and Eugénie Strong, added support for fellows in the arts by 1913, but it did not manifest the same exclusive and doctrinaire approach to history or style seen at the Academy.

The Academy’s close relationship with architecture had been mediated through some of the discipline’s most prominent institutions. Chief among these is the firm of McKim, Mead and White, one of the largest and most successful in the U.S. through the 1930s. For 58 of the first 64 years of its existence, the Academy’s president was a McKim, Mead & White partner. The Academy also benefited from close relationships with Ivy League university programs in architecture at Columbia, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania, whose students collectively received almost three-quarters of Rome Prize fellowships in architecture until 1940. These schools were in turn connected through association with the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (BAID). This New York-based organization wrote programs and judged design competitions that were used for teaching purposes

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54 The other board members were usually businessmen, lawyers, and other professionals, who essentially represented the Academy’s wealthy non-artistic, non-academic benefactors. There were a handful of art historians and arts administrators as well, whose interests could conceivably lie with either “half” of the Academy.

55 I have determined the Board’s makeup at this time by correlating the terms of service and professions for the Trustees listed in Kohl, et al., Centennial Directory.

56 See note 4 above.


58 Thirty Rome Prizes in architecture were awarded from 1894-1940 (plus the one subjected to damnatio memoriae). Of these, ten went to graduates of Columbia, seven to Yale, and five to Penn, three to MIT, and two to Cornell. Princeton, Harvard, and Catholic Universities each produced one Rome Prize winner in architecture. Interestingly, the only school to continue its record of Rome Prize success in architecture after the war will be Yale. For further discussion of the relationship between the Academy and universities, see Chapter 2.
at most of the country’s architecture schools until the 1930s. The BAID also awarded the Paris Prize, its own fellowship for architectural study at the École des Beaux-Arts itself.

To be associated with the Academy before 1940 was to be part of an architectural establishment defined in Beaux-Arts terms. This association, which had initially aided its survival through the Academy’s first unsteady decades of existence, became a liability after the Second World War. By the mid-1940s, when the end of this system’s hold on architectural discourse, practice, and education had become undeniable, the Academy’s Trustees had undertaken a deliberate strategy to redefine its relationship to all of the arts for the postwar world. Their invitation to George Howe to serve as the Academy’s first architect in residence was a key element of this process, one that publicly signaled a dramatically reoriented stance towards architecture and, by implication, all the visual arts.

Laurence Roberts’ first letters to Howe show a palpable excitement about his promised involvement:

Your presence there is a guarantee that the Academy will be a force in contemporary architecture, and gives it a distinction it could have in no other way….I do hope that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in one of these places in the near future, so that I may tell you personally how excited and pleased Mrs. Roberts and I are that you will be in Rome, and how really fortunate the Academy is to have you.

Two weeks later Roberts wrote again, stating that:

what you are giving the Academy through your reputation, your knowledge, and your presence there [in Rome] is of enormous value. If the Academy is to mean anything to contemporary architecture, it will be due first of all to you…. We leave for Italy at the end of April, and hope very much you will be in the East before that, as we are most anxious to see

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60 The BAID was founded in 1894 as the Society of Beaux-Arts architects, adopting its second name in 1916. It became the “National Institute for Architectural Education” in 1956, and changed its name again in 1996 to become the Van Alen Institute. The Paris Prize continued to be awarded until the 1970s. Today the Van Alen Institute sponsors design competitions and awards New York Prize Fellowships in architecture.
61 Letter, Laurence Roberts to George Howe, March 4, 1947, George Howe Papers, Department of Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, New York (hereafter “Avery Archives”).
you. In the meantime, thank you again for accepting our offer. It means everything to the Academy.⁶²

Roberts’ language conveys both great enthusiasm and sincere relief. Clearly, it was a high priority for the Academy to be perceived as “a force in contemporary architecture,” something it could not have claimed plausibly in 1940. Unlike the School of Classical Studies, which returned to the prewar tradition of appointing a Professor-in-Charge, the School of Fine Arts would depend entirely on the Academy’s Director for its practical administration, and on the newly inaugurated residency program for the fellows’ artistic direction.⁶³ The first participants in the newly inaugurated residency program were Howe, composers Samuel Barber and Douglas Stuart Moore (also a trustee), and the art historian Henry P. McIlhenny.⁶⁴ Of these figures, only Barber and Howe both had prominent, national reputations as creative figures in their respective fields. Importantly, as the only practitioner of any of the visual arts, Howe carried the symbolic task of representing and embodying the Academy’s new aesthetic philosophy.⁶⁵

George Howe had no prior relationship with the American Academy in Rome before his residency.⁶⁶ Neither was he in 1947 part of a prominent architectural practice or associated with any university.⁶⁷ He was, however, very much a product of the Beaux-Arts establishment with which the

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⁶² Letter, Laurence Roberts to George Howe, March 17, 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
⁶³ Frank E. Brown of Yale held this position from 1947-1952, during which he supervised the archaeological excavations at Cosa. See Kohl, et al., Centennial Directory, p. 385.
⁶⁴ Moore was Professor of Music at Columbia University from 1927-62. McIlhenny was Curator of Decorative Arts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. There were also residents in the School of Classical Studies; the first was William R. Tongue in 1948. See their respective entries in Kohl, et. al., Centennial Directory.
⁶⁵ The Academy’s embrace of modern architecture appears to have been much more decisive and more successful than other branches of modern art. The first resident in painting, for example, was muralist Henry Varnum Poor, who came to the Academy in 1950-51, an important but artistically conservative figure in the age of Abstract Expressionism. However, as we shall see in further discussions, architecture at the postwar Academy will prove an interesting admixture of both progressive and conservative tendencies.
⁶⁷ This stands in contrast with many other postwar architects involved with the Academy. For example, Wallace K. Harrison, who served as a trustee from 1959-64, stayed briefly at the Academy in 1922 while traveling on a Rotch fellowship. It is occasionally stated that Howe began teaching at Yale in the late 1940s, but this is inaccurate. His employment at Yale began with his appointment as chairman of its School of Architecture on January 1, 1950, an appointment likely influenced by Louis Kahn, who had taught at Yale since 1948. See Stern, Howe, p. 210-11, and “Yale 1950-1965,” Oppositions 4 (October 1974): 35-61. It is noteworthy that both at Yale and at the Academy, Howe

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prewar Academy had been intertwined. Howe had studied architecture at Harvard and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and his first years of practice as part of the firm of Meillor, Meigs & Howe produced mostly sedate buildings in historic revival styles. But this was not the same man whose presence interested young Coolidge in 1947. The Howe who gained and maintained international prominence was the modern architect he had become at age 42, following a “conversion” in 1929, the year he entered partnership with William Lescaze. Their PSFS Building in Philadelphia (1929-32), arguably the first International Style skyscraper constructed anywhere in the world, became part of the modernist canon, especially after its inclusion in the seminal 1932 Museum of Modern Art show *International Architecture: An Exhibition*, and the two accompanying publications by Alfred J. Barr, Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock (fig. 1.5). Johnson described Howe and Lescaze as two of the three “only successful modern architects in America” in 1932 (the third was the Viennese émigré Richard Neutra). Exposure from the exhibition, which traveled to fifteen other U.S. cities from 1932-33, as well as the even more widely-distributed and influential books, gave Howe a stamp of avant-garde legitimacy among the growing community of American architects aligned with a modern rather than a traditionalist approach to design.

While Johnson’s assessment was certainly valid in 1932, Howe’s career as a modern architect was more prominent than prolific, especially in his later years. The firm of Howe & Lescaze built roughly twenty projects from 1929-1933, and his later partnership with Oscar Stonorov and Louis I. succeeded the conservative Beaux-Arts architect Everett V. Meeks (1879-1954), Dean of Yale’s School of Fine Arts until 1947 and an Academy Trustee from 1928-1949. See “Arbiter of the Arts,” *Architectural Forum* 86 (June 1947): 74-76, 152, 154 and Meeks’ obituary in the *New York Times* (28 October 1954).
Kahn produced a number of war housing projects, a respectable record given the effects of the Great Depression and World War II on the building industry during these years. But Howe’s most unqualified and enduring success was as a highly visible advocate for the cause of modern architecture in the U.S. He did so as the author of dozens of published articles, and also by holding a good number of the relatively few publicly visible positions in architecture: designing (with Stonorov) the children’s amusement area for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, serving on the jury for the 1939 Smithsonian Art Gallery competition, and ultimately being appointed to the highest architectural position in Federal Government. Howe’s Washington career was summarized in this way by his biographer Robert A. M. Stern:

In terms of the stylistic preferences of the governmental bureaucracy it marked the beginning of the shift away from the stripped classicism of the 1930s toward an acceptance of the formal vocabulary of the International Style. It also established Howe as a leading spokesman for American architecture and a leading force in the reconciliation between the seemingly conflicting beliefs of modernist architects, still in the minority, and the profession at large.

In March of 1947, when he received the first letter from Laurance Roberts discussing his upcoming residency, Howe had just been appointed director of the Jefferson Memorial Expansion Monument design competition. This competition ultimately selected Eero Saarinen’s iconic St. Louis Arch, and was a highly visible event that publicized the ongoing debate regarding whether modern design could or should aspire to “monumentality.” Howe had the task of writing the competition program and appointing the jury, and often served as a national spokesperson for the project as a key element of this discussion. See the discussion of this issue in Chapter 3. Key elements of this debate include the essay by Giedon, José Lluis Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion, “Nine Points on Monumentality” of 1943, reprinted with an indispensable introduction to this topic by Joan Ockman in Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology (New York: Rizzoli, 1993); see also the 1944 essay by Louis I. Kahn, “Monumentality” reprinted in the same anthology.

72 Stern lists all of Howe’s documented works, including bibliographies of those published, in Howe, p. 237-251. The wartime housing projects were Pine Ford Acres of Middletown, PA (1941), Lily Ponds in Washington, D.C. (1942) and Carver Court, Coatesville, PA (1942-43).
73 Stern provides a complete bibliography of Howe’s published writings in Howe, p. 253-259.
74 Stern, Howe, p. 208.
75 See the discussion of this issue in Chapter 3.
whole. Thus, at this moment he was a particularly prominent public advocate, promoting the cause of modern architecture to a national audience.

By extending an invitation to George Howe to be part of the American Academy in Rome, the Trustees made an explicit gesture of association with modern architecture, its former ideological adversary. However, in Howe they had also chosen one of the movement’s most patrician emissaries. Unlike European émigrés like Gropius or Mies van der Rohe, Howe was a “safe” modernist who was in an excellent position to make the Academy’s transition from one architectural viewpoint to another as smooth as possible. Howe’s personal background was highly privileged, and his social skills were legendary. Born into a wealthy family, he traveled widely from an early age.\textsuperscript{76} He was educated at a boarding school in Switzerland before attending the exclusive Groton School during roughly the same period as the young Franklin Delano Roosevelt. There “he exhibited a sophistication which puzzled the Rector and made him a bit suspicious, but George’s record in class and on the football field was so good that the suspicion never ripened into action.”\textsuperscript{77} Few discussions of Howe neglect to mention his legendary charm and his diplomacy, often explicitly and significantly labeled “aristocratic.”\textsuperscript{78}

For an institution trying to bridge a gap between its conservative origins, tastes, and membership and a new paradigm rooted in the avant-garde’s socialist ideals and revolutionary aesthetics, George Howe was ideally qualified to perform the task. The Board of Trustees, always a mixture of individuals drawn from the worlds of business, the arts, and academia, had experienced a

\textsuperscript{76} Howe’s mother, Helen Fisher Bradford, came from a prominent Philadelphia family and had been born and educated in France. His father was from Massachusetts, where Howe was born, and died soon after his son’s first birthday. Stern, \textit{Howe}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{77} The Rector of Groton would have been no stranger to culturally privileged students, but the young Howe’s demeanor appeared insufficiently “American” within the school’s elite but Puritan environment. To twenty-first century ears his concerns might suggest suspicions of homosexuality, but the locus of anxiety seems to have been more cultural than sexual (Howe’s later adult life manifested active and apparently committed heterosexuality). His original nickname among his Groton peers was “Frenchy” due to his “fairly elaborate accent and manners.” These observations were recorded in the diary of Francis Biddle, Howe’s close friend at Groton, whose memoirs are cited by Stern, \textit{Howe}, p. 6-7.

dramatic turnover in the 1940s, but it remained a conservative group overall. Of the seven architects serving at that time, all would have been considered traditionalists in the late 1940s. But facing a boardroom full of conservatives skeptical about modern architecture was nothing new to Howe. By the late 1940s, he had already done so with the PSFS administration, the jury which selected Eliel and Eero Saarinen’s doomed design for a new Smithsonian Museum of Contemporary Art on the Washington D.C. Mall (fig. 1.6), and finally in his capacity as Supervising Architect for the Federal Works Agency during World War II. Howe was, in essence, a “gentleman-modernist,” an establishment architect who had made modernism more palatable for American capitalism and the U.S. government. One of the few architects of his day who could be equally comfortable at the country club and at the Museum of Modern Art, he occupied a truly unique position in a movement generally identified with more revolutionary, foreign-born figures.

Furthermore, and most unexpectedly, MoMA itself appears to have played an important but hitherto unknown role in the Academy’s selection of Howe. The very first sentence in Roberts’ initial letter to Howe reads: “I am delighted to hear from Philip Johnson that the American Academy in Rome is so fortunate as to have you as architect in residence for four months next fall.

79 The architects on the Board in 1947 were Everett V. Meeks (see note 75 above), William Platt, Eric Gugler (White House Architect during the 1930s-40s), George S. Koyl (the last Dean at Penn to maintain Beaux-Arts methodology until 1950, before it was modernized by G. Holmes Perkins), Henry R. Shepley (1887-1962), partner in conservative Boston firm of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbot (itself a successor to H.H. Richardson’s practice), and J. K. Smith of McKim, Mead & White. According to Yegül, Platt’s father Charles Platt (Trustee, AAR President) was invited to be part of the AAR because of his wealth and connections. William and his brother Geoffrey Platt continued their father’s practice, and their main work is the Classical Revival estate of Longue Vue in New Orleans (1939-1942).

80 For example, Howe had been the only modern architect to serve on the Public Building Administration’s “decidedly conservative advisory board on architectural design” (Stern, Howe, p. 198).

81 Howe began serving the government as a consultant to the Public Buildings Administration in Washington, D.C. in 1941, and was appointed to the FWA position in 1942. For a summary of this period of his career, see Stern, Howe, p. 198-206.


and winter.” A separate letter from Johnson to Louis Kahn, whose Academy stay would be pivotal in his later career, states: “George [Howe] says that you might like to go to Rome next winter…. I feel quite sure that this could be arranged and would be delighted to recommend you. It rather looks as if I would be in Rome some time next winter and we could have fun.”

Both his position as an intermediary between Howe and Roberts, and the confident tone with which he claims he can guarantee Kahn a Rome Prize, demonstrate that Johnson considered himself to be an influential advisor to the Academy during this crucial period of transition in early 1947. At this time, Johnson had just resumed his position at MoMA as curator of its department of architecture (which he had single-handedly financed and administered before departing in 1934). He was busy preparing the Mies van der Rohe exhibition that would open in the fall of that same year, writing the accompanying monograph, and designing his own, radically modern Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. Johnson had known Howe professionally even before the 1932 International Style exhibition, since Howe and Lescaze had been invited to submit a design for a new building for MoMA in May of 1930. Howe’s MoMA association continued during Johnson’s absence from 1934-1943, when he served on the committee that organized the exhibit of Le Corbusier’s work during his 1935 visit to the U.S. He also served with MoMA Director Thomas

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86 Schultzze, Johnson, p. 171-183.
Mabry on the jury for the 1939 Smithsonian Art Gallery competition. In later interviews, Johnson characterizes his relationship with Howe as longstanding, friendly and sympathetic.

Someone at the Academy thought it might be helpful to consult Philip Johnson. Neither the Academy’s archives nor any of the Johnson archives hold any direct correspondence between the architect and the Academy during this period. However, the letter from Roberts to Howe makes it clear that they had spoken directly, and Roberts is the most plausible candidate for this decision. In later years, the process was that Roberts, as Academy Director, selected and invited Residents from a slate that had been previously approved by the Fine Arts Committee. While serving as the director of the Brooklyn Art Museum in the 1930s, Roberts would have been familiar with most of the major figures in the New York museum world. MoMA was the first U.S. museum to include architecture of any sort in its official purview, and Johnson was synonymous with this department. Few people would have been in a better position to advise the Academy about its own relevance to modern architecture, and he was a natural figure to consult.

Yet it is an understatement to describe Johnson as an unusual figure on the postwar architecture scene. A contradictory mixture of the progressive and conservative (even reactionary), Johnson is both an obvious and a surprising figure to orchestrate the Academy’s renewal in the late 1940s. Originally a casual student of classics and philosophy at Harvard, he became a self-taught architectural historian and curator. His influential efforts to define and promote the International Style had already helped establish and alter the face of modern architecture in the U.S. in 1932, a full


decade before he became an architect in 1943. His curatorial and critical work of the 1930s and the Miesian glass and steel aesthetic of his late 1940s buildings aligned him publicly with the modern movement. However, even in his earliest buildings, a sensibility more closely associated with the discipline's academic traditions was already evident in his tendency towards classical order and symmetry in composition. Johnson also chose to present works like his Glass House not in exclusively modern terms, but in relation to a plethora of historic precedents such as Choisy’s view of the Athenian Acropolis, Schinkel, Ledoux, and the American vernacular. Independently wealthy, Ivy-League educated, and well-traveled, he fit the Academy’s profile of cultural sophistication. Openly homosexual at a time when this remained rare, if not dangerous, his presence would have been considered extremely daring, especially for an organization embedded in and supported by the more conservative wing of New York’s social elite.

This may explain why Philip Johnson would only become visibly involved with the Academy in 1973, when he formally joined its Board of Trustees. But as the apparent “matchmaker” who helped Howe and the Academy find each other, he demonstrated his uncanny ability to read the pulse of the American architectural vanguard. His presence in the story also helps explain how deftly the Academy was able to find the perfect figurehead for its new, more modern artistic image. Howe was not only the ideal candidate for the Academy because of his modernist reputation and diplomatic skills, but because he was one of the few architects of such stature likely to accept the offer. Although still highly visible, Howe’s career had become stagnant by the late 1940s. He had left his position with the federal government in 1945 at age 58, with hopes of returning to private practice, but had seen very little success, designing only a handful of structures from 1947-1955.
(only two of which were built).\textsuperscript{93} This stands in contrast to other modern architects whose careers took off after the war, such as Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, Harrison & Abramovitz, SOM, and even Frank Lloyd Wright, whose services were soon in demand once wartime restrictions on building projects and materials were phased out. Neither was Howe formally involved with any university’s architecture program until his appointment as Chair of Yale’s School of Architecture in 1950. Practically speaking, he had little work and limited sources of income.\textsuperscript{94} In addition, the obverse of his convivial, socially adept public persona was a turbulent, somewhat notorious personal life marked by promiscuity and heavy drinking.\textsuperscript{95} The preserved correspondence between Howe and Roberts reveals the former’s keen interest in specifying the financial terms of his residency, which suggests that this opportunity was most welcome.\textsuperscript{96} In other correspondence, he often discussed his strained finances while announcing himself ready to settle into a sort of genteel retirement in Rome.\textsuperscript{97} 

Johnson had successfully identified the single most suitable and grateful recipient for the Academy’s first architecture residency. Given his direct acquaintanceship with what was still a small community of modern architects, this probably took little effort on his part. However, Johnson’s involvement suggests a direct interest in helping the Academy and Rome retain their relevance to the

\textsuperscript{93} Howe was Supervising Architect for the Public Buildings Administration for over three years, between February of 1942 and September 14, 1945. See Stern, \textit{Howe}, p. 198, 209, and 251.

\textsuperscript{94} It would probably be an exaggeration to characterize Howe as in any way impoverished, given that both of his parents had both been extremely wealthy. However, he and his wife Martije had been living separately for many years at this point, and it is unclear what the exact state of his finances was by 1947. He was certainly grateful for his appointment to Yale in 1950; for further discussion of Howe’s residency, see Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{95} An affectionate but candid account of Howe’s character is provided by his daughter Helen Howe West in \textit{George Howe: Architect} (Philadelphia: William Nunn, 1973). Her account was one of many sources used by Stern, who also includes numerous accounts of Howe’s unhappy marriage, extramarital relationships, and drinking; see Stern, \textit{Howe}, p. 46, and Chapter 3 below.

\textsuperscript{96} For the terms of Howe’s residency, see letters, L. Roberts to G. Howe, 4 March 1947 and 17 March 1947, and G. Howe to L. Roberts, 16 April 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives. While West cites letters from her father complaining about his financial straits in Rome (see West, \textit{Howe}, p. 59), the Academy’s agreement with Howe was to pay him a total of $4000 for two four-month stays in Rome, whereas Howe extended his second stay roughly six months beyond what was agreed. For further discussion of Howe’s residency, see Chapter 3 below.

\textsuperscript{97} Stern cites Howe’s coy response to the job offer from Dean Sawyer of Yale (which he accepted gladly) dated 31 August 1949: “I had…rather made up my mind to live in Europe and take up a long deferred project to write a book.” \textit{Howe}, p. 210.
postwar discipline. As someone financially free to spend time in Rome whenever he liked (and who later professed, at age 88, his own intention to retire there at age 100), he had no direct personal stake in the institution’s opportunities for fellowships or residencies. But his interest in explicitly asserting through both design and rhetoric the interrelationship between modern architecture and the discipline’s historic foundations, unusual in the late 1940s, is a significant analogue for the role the Academy would carve out for itself. Johnson’s contradictory persona and interests mirror the tension between old and new at the Academy, a theme which would be palpable in its efforts to market itself publicly during the late 1940s and early 1950s, and adjust its own public image for a new age.

Selling the New Academy

In August 1946, nearly identical announcements were published in two professional design periodicals, the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (J.A.I.A.) and *Landscape Architecture*.

James Kellum Smith, President of the American Academy in Rome, announces the appointment, as Director of the Academy, of Captain Laurence P. Roberts, Signal Corps, now assigned to duty in Washington. Captain Roberts will assume his Directorship of the Academy, in Rome, Italy, after his discharge from the Army.

Captain Roberts, until recently Director of the Brooklyn Museum, is a native of Philadelphia. He was graduated from Princeton University, *summa cum laude*, in 1929 and for a year thereafter studied the history of fine arts in the Princeton graduate school. From 1930 to 1932 he was employed by the Philadelphia Museum in the Department of Far Eastern Art.

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98 The precise quotation is “My plans are to retire on my one-hundredth birthday. Then I will move to Rome.” Johnson died in 2005 at age 98. Schultze, *Johnson*, p. 420. While Johnson never had an official residency at the Academy, he appears to have been an occasional visitor there, according to architecture fellow Spero Daltas (conversations with author, 24 April, 1 and 5 May 2007). The AAR maintains a list of “notable visitors” which become part of its official history, and who are clearly those with whom formal association is mutually desirable. Whether it was Johnson or the Academy that preferred their relationship to remain unofficial until the 1970s is currently unclear. Other than the preserved letters to Howe and Kahn, and his letters of support of Rome Prize applications for three of his employees in the 1950s, the archives retain no record of any correspondence with the AAR.

99 This interest aligns Johnson with a figure like Colin Rowe, whose famous essays of 1947 and 1949 on “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa” and “Mannerism and Modern Architecture” parallel Johnson’s own analysis of his Glass House. However, Rowe was not an active designer, and his early essays would remain part of architecture’s intellectual underground until their re-publication in the 1970s. This fundamental issue of how modern architecture is related to history in the 1940s–early 1960s, especially the role of Sigfried Giedion, will be discussed further in Chapter 2 below.
The following year he studied in the Orient, and joined the staff of the Brooklyn Museum in 1934 as Curator of Oriental Art. In 1939, he was appointed Director of the Brooklyn Museum from which, in 1942, he was granted a leave of absence for active service in the Army. His resignation of the Directorship of the Brooklyn Museum recently was announced.

The American Academy in Rome, which began as the American School of Architecture in Rome in 1894, was chartered in 1905, to promote the study of painting and sculpture as well as architecture, by an Act of Congress. The Academy was consolidated with the American School of Classical Studies in Rome in 1912 under an amendment to the charter by which its scope was widened to include the study of archaeology, literature, and history of the classical and later periods. Since that date the Academy has consisted of a School of Fine Arts and a School of Classical Studies. Studies in landscape architecture were provided for in 1915 by a Fellowship established with the aid of the American Society of Landscape Architects. In 1926 the Garden Club of American donated funds to support a second Fellowship in landscape architecture, which the Club has since permanently endowed. The School of Fine Arts was further enlarged in 1921 by the addition of a Department of Musical Composition, with provision for three Fellowships.

The Academy is situated on the Janiculum, the highest point in Rome. It has assets of $3,614,075 including its buildings and exclusive of its library which contains 50,144 volumes. Each year before the war, eight Fellowships were awarded, for terms of two years, to assist the recipients to study in Rome at the Academy. The American Academy, closed during the War for the first time in its distinguished history, will be reopened on October 1, 1946 for eleven holders of War-deferred Fellowships, and anticipated the resumption of competitions for its Rome Fellowships in 1947. In the meantime, however, it already has resumed a part of its artistic and scholarly activities with provision for studies carried on in Rome by members, and former members, of the American Army in Italy.

Several other foreign Academies in Rome have been reopened during the past few months. Among these are the French Academy, the Swedish School, the Dutch School, and the Rumanian Academy.100

This announcement would prove optimistic in a few particulars: the Academy’s official re-opening would not occur until October 1 of 1947, and only a handful of the eleven deferred Fellows would return at that time.101 In other details it is almost comically precise: the exact amount of dollars in endowment, the precise number of books in its library, and its geographic dominance on the highest point overlooking the Eternal City. The details of Captain Roberts’ career and his patriotic service

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100 American Academy in Rome,” Landscape Architecture 36 (July 1946): 159-60; The most substantial difference in the similar (but not identical) “The American Academy in Rome,” J.A.I.A. (August, 1946): 74-75, is the absence of any mention of the recent re-opening of other national academies.

101 As far as I can tell, only two of those with deferred fellowships in the fine arts came back to the Academy after the war: Walker Cain in architecture, and Frederick Edmondson in landscape architecture [“American Academy in Rome” Landscape Architecture 38 (Aug. 1948): 105]. In 1947, two new fellowships in architecture and one in landscape fellowships were awarded, along with two new sculpture and two new painting fellows were selected: sculptors Concetta Scaravaglione and Albert W. Wein, and painters William Thon and Charles Owens; see Art News 46 (June 1947): 60.
lend a sense of prestige and patriotism to the institution, while the careful enumeration of other similar academies already in operation in Rome makes the American Academy’s intentions appear prudent, even necessary to the national dignity of a military victor. That Romania might precede the U.S. in anything must have had great rhetorical effect.\textsuperscript{102}

These proclamations were designed to re-introduce the Academy to a public that may well have forgotten its existence, doubted its return, or never heard of it all. They show that by the summer of 1946 the Academy was confident enough in its future to believe it could resume regular operations in Rome that coming fall. But while stating many facts and plans, it stays silent about precisely what the artistic, rather than the quantifiable, benefits of the Academy might be for young artists, architects, and landscape architects. Silence was certainly the most prudent approach: in 1946, this institution was still in the midst of its ongoing efforts to substantially modify its cultural mission, and it is likely no one involved in the process was certain of the outcome.

In retrospect, the Academy’s choice to adapt to the more liberal postwar environment appears necessary and prescient, and was the only way to prevent the institution from hardening into a cultural anachronism. But as an intrinsically conservative institution, the Academy took an enormous and rather daring gamble by so utterly redefining itself and the Rome Prize. The fact that the Academy’s very name, location, and history were inextricably embedded in and associated with a prior, now largely discredited era, must have worked against even its best efforts. Although it would find in George Howe an almost ideal figure to serve as the Academy’s ambassador to a new, more modern generation, there was no guarantee that younger architects enamored of Gropius, Neutra, Mies, and Le Corbusier would reciprocate this interest.

\textsuperscript{102} Unfortunately, little scholarship currently exists on the transitions made by other national academies during the post-war years, except for Wallace-Hadrill’s \textit{British School at Rome}. That the listing of French architects who won the Prix de Rome in this period includes Algerian-born modernist Olivier-Clément Cacoub (1953), Vietnamese Ngo Viet Thu (1955), and Michel Marot (1954), a former student of Gropius’ at Harvard in 1952 who proposed an African research center in Nigeria indicates a much-expanded, post-colonial field of acceptable winners and subjects of study.
The problem of the Academy’s image during these years appears both literally and graphically in a set of fliers preserved in the papers of Walker O. Cain, and are likely drawn by him.\textsuperscript{103} Cain, winner of the 1940 Rome Prize in architecture, was one of those who took up a deferred fellowship in 1948 (fig. 1.7).\textsuperscript{104} Three of these fliers are invitations that announce social events planned by the Alumni Association of the American Academy in Rome (AAAAR), an organization which was supportive of but distinct from the Academy itself. Two fliers include precise dates for their announced events and effectively depict a clear alteration in the institution’s self-perception over a short period. The announcement for a February 21, 1947 dinner depicts a group of suited, middle-aged white men surrounded by nude, frolicking young women (fig. 1.8). The overall environment suggests a private men’s club, whose ornate grand piano, marble columns, and huge Oriental rug convey wealth and exclusivity. Its location is identified as New York’s Century Club, which had been a traditional site of the Academy’s alumni events since its founding and was designed, most appropriately, as an Italianate palazzo by McKim, Mead and White.\textsuperscript{105} The image’s only direct reference to Rome is the lupa, although instead of suckling the city’s founders, she serves cocktails while supporting a nubile blonde. The atmosphere is one of elite intimacy, gendered privilege (the “No Wimmin Aloud” declaration being especially ironic), and raucous, expensive excess (note the pair of feet at left, belonging to an unconscious reveler).

Yet only three years later a similar announcement, also in Cain’s papers, presents the same organization in dramatically changed aesthetic and social terms (fig. 1.9). The second flier’s graphic style is more spare and abstract, far less risqué than in 1947. This gathering’s venue has also moved

\textsuperscript{103} Walker O. Cain Papers, Avery Archives. The text on these fliers matches Cain’s handwriting.

\textsuperscript{104} Cain received a traveling fellowship during the war, which he used to visit Mexico in the summer of 1941. He graduated from Princeton in 1940 and spent his entire career at McKim, Mead, and White, becoming one of the partners of its successor firm, Steinman, Cain and White in 1961; see Cain, s.v., Kohl et. al., Centennial Directory.

\textsuperscript{105} The Valentines write that the first official meeting of the AAR was held at the Century Association, commonly known as the Century Club, at 7 West 43rd Street on June 12, 1894 (\textit{Academy}, p. 10). The Society of Fellows of the American Academy in Rome website states that alumni events were celebrated at the Century Club following World War I; see \url{http://www.sof-aarome.org/sof_sof_history.html}. This is separate from the Metropolitan Club at 1 E. 60th Street, another McKim, Mead and White-designed landmark that houses the Academy’s New York headquarters today.
from the ornate gentlemen’s club of tradition to a loft-like painter’s studio. Here, “wives, husbands, boon companions are cordially invited;” respectable ladies are not only welcome, but may even be doing the inviting, while the socially vague “boon companions” suggests a discreet welcome to homosexual partners.\textsuperscript{106} While the earlier flier’s image of bacchanalian extremes was likely a self-mocking exaggeration, this one swings the pendulum to an opposite extreme of cool refinement. A map and poster announce that Rome brings this group together, and in contrast to the smoke-filled hedonism of 1947, the only hint of excess is the slightly naughty wink of the \textit{lupa}, still in her spot presiding over the drink table.\textsuperscript{107}

A third flier announces an AAAAR event on March 9 of an unidentified year (fig. 1.10). As in 1950, the Association invites its members to gather in a studio setting, depicted in even more dramatic architectural terms as an enormous loft with an entire wall of glazing. At the center of the image, a female sculptor is suspended, interrupted at her work on a colossal, geometrically-abstracted version of the \textit{lupa}. Its linear style with minimal modeling is closer to the style of the 1950 flier, and the price for dinner for one (four dollars) is the same as in 1950. The fact that the sculptor is a woman would have been quite significant during these years: sculptor Concetta Scaravaglione (whom the image resembles closely) was at the Academy from 1947-1950, and had received considerable publicity as the first woman to receive a Fine Arts fellowship (fig. 1.11).\textsuperscript{108} The “Charles Keck” identified as hosting the event at his studio was another Academy sculptor who had begun his career as an assistant to Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and was at the Academy as a fellow from 1901-04. Since Keck died in April of 1951, this provides a clear \textit{ante quem} date for the event and the flier. The language of gender in the text, which invites “old & new fellows, wives and other

\textsuperscript{106} This phrase takes on additional resonance in light of Philip Johnson’s connection with the Academy in 1947.
\textsuperscript{107} The beverage-dispensing \textit{lupa} appears to have been real. A 1948 letter from the AAAAR states that “the ‘Wolf’ was owned by the alumni association but would be housed at the Century Club; Letter, Richard K. Webel to J. K. Smith, 4 June 1948, AAR Records, AAA [5758: 1385].
favorite women” reads as somewhat less progressive than that of the 1950 flier. However, since the 1947 and 1950 events were both held on Friday evenings, and March 9 fell on a Friday in 1951, that makes 1951 the most likely date for this flier. Once again, Rome is incorporated visually into the image by way of the iconic lupa, doubly present as model and artistic project (and sadly lacking any connection to beverage service). Rome is also present through text, as a series of words forming a frame around the perimeter. Simply naming a sequence of iconic buildings, piazzas, and other referents to the Rome experience ("Campidoglio”; “Giovanni’s Watered Wine”), they recall the city through shared topoi, while the central image of the artist at work suggests its lasting creative inspiration.

These fliers employ distinct images of privilege with contrasting social and aesthetic dimensions. That of the 1947 flier suggests the tastes and humor of a conservative all-male establishment; the other, used in the two later fliers, is a more progressive, socially inclusive image of sophistication. While this sequence of images comes from documents produced to communicate internally to an institutional community, rather than project the Academy’s image to the broader world, they do illustrate its self-conception during a key period of reorientation in visual terms. As such, they depict an aesthetic and cultural shift between 1947-1951 that mirrors the efforts being made to redefine its artistic mission. The policy changes initiated in 1946 sought to substantially change a community that had happily seen itself as the traditionalist old-boys’ club of Cain’s 1947 flier. In this earliest image, there is little beyond a couple of oblique references to architecture (a T-square) and Rome (the lupa) to distinguish this group of cavorting, privileged men from a gathering of bankers or politicians. The two later fliers show several significant and presumably deliberate changes: to a drawing style more in tune with contemporary commercial art, to gatherings where women participate as more than objects of exaggerated sexual performance and pleasure, and

\[109\] My thanks to Sarah Rich for this very useful observation.
environments where the making of art and the link to Rome are presented more overtly as integral to the event’s meaning.

On the surface, such image-making for private party announcements seems a frivolous activity, but substantial issues were at stake. The Academy alumni, many of whom (like Cain) would remain involved in its ongoing affairs as trustees, jurors, and in other capacities, all had an enormous investment in maintaining its image. In order for the Rome Prize to continue to carry the sort of prestige that benefits those who have already earned it, it had to have continuing relevance and value within both current and future cultural environments. Unlike the Nobel Prize committee, which enjoys the luxury of hindsight in identifying research that has already redefined physics, medicine, and its other premiated fields, the Academy’s task requires considerable foresight. For the Rome Prize to remain more than a relic of a past, discarded system, jurors needed recognize promising young candidates who were likely to become successful, ultimately lending their own reputations to the institution: as journalist Russell Lynes would recognize in 1969, “it is they who ornament the Academy and not the Academy which honors them.” The new residency program would aid this process by allowing the Academy to associated itself with individuals, like Howe and Barber, who had already established their artistic reputations. It was also the single most efficient way to steer the Academy’s public reputation in new directions quickly.

There is no direct evidence of what exactly motivated the dramatic change in imagery used by the Academy’s alumni association between 1947-1951. However, it must have been disappointing to the Academy when, despite its efforts to redefine itself, the response to its first postwar offering of Rome Prizes in architecture was less than overwhelming. In April of 1947, George Howe wrote to Laurance Roberts that “I am sorry to hear that the [Rome Prize] judgment has been postponed,

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10 Cain (1915-1993) served as Secretary of the AAAAR for 1950-51 and served on a number of Rome Prize juries. He was an Academy Trustee from 1952-1982 and Board Chair from 1974-81. See Cain, s.v., Kohl et al., Centennial Directory.
but if there are as yet an insufficient number of submissions, it is probably as well.”

This paucity of applicants for the 1947 Rome Prize may have worried the Academy, and contributed to concern about its image. However, there had been relatively little publicity for the renewed Rome Prize in art and architecture journals before the applications for 1947 would have been due. As mentioned above, during the previous summer the appointment of Laurance Roberts, whose tenure began in October of 1946, had been announced widely in the arts’ most prominent publications. But there was little additional publicity for the newly offered Rome Prizes beyond the notices announcing Roberts’ appointment and the Academy’s return to operations. The next set of published announcements on the 1947 Rome Prizes appeared in the summer and fall of 1947, after they had already been awarded (fig. 1.12). This was consistent with the prewar practice of publishing the Rome Prize winners’ competition designs in the journal Pencil Points. In the spring of 1948, the Academy began to issue brief announcements for the Rome Prize to be published in the J.A.I.A., Landscape Architecture, Progressive Architecture (the successor to Pencil Points), Architect and Engineer, Architectural Record, Architectural Forum, Museum News, Art Journal, and Art News. While most of these announcements simply stated the terms of the prize or listed its winners, they served to publicize its availability to a disciplinary audience of architects and artists.

Into one such announcement, published after its first few months open in January 1948, the Academy took the effort to insert a brief explanation of its architectural relevance for the readers of the Journal of the American Institute of Architects.

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112 Letter, George Howe to Laurence Roberts, 16 April 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
115 These usually appeared in the summer: see, for example, volumes 14 (June 1933): 277-79; 15 (June 1934): 267-68; 16 (July 1935): 14; 17 (July 1936): 378-79; 18 (July 1937): 459-62. An announcement for the competition appears in Pencil Points 18 (Dec. 1937): 16. The fellowships winners often received mention in journals such as Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Art News, and Art Digest during the 1930s.
In the words of James Kellum Smith, F.A.I.A., President of the Board of Trustees, it is the hope that Fellows will gain “a broad human understanding, so that they may return to America, not with the thought of imitating the great art of the past, but with a power that will enable them to interpret freely and naturally the life of their own times in their own country.”

Although James K. Smith occupied two of the same positions held by William Rutherford Mead over two decades earlier—President of the Academy and partner in the firm of McKim, Mead and White—it is only his affiliation with the Academy that is mentioned here. Smith’s defense of the Academy employs terms that deliberately disassociate it from its own past. His language is carefully calculated to sell the Academy’s mission to a professional readership that was stylistically and ideologically divided. He avoids mentioning the classical tradition per se, but in referring to “the great art of the past” bestows a respectful label on what is otherwise defined implicitly as “that which should not be imitated,” i.e., Rome’s venerable monuments of architectural history. The fellowship experience is given a positive definition in only the vaguest terms: somehow, a year in Rome will make the winner better able to respond to an utterly modern and American context by inculcating “broad human understanding,” with no suggestion of why Rome might do so more effectively than any other location. Smith’s account suggests that he was better prepared to emphasize a break with the past than a clearly articulated explanation for Rome’s present relevance. But his argument is obviously designed to appeal to a more contemporary set of artistic priorities, such as creative liberty, expanded social awareness, and attentive perception of immediate cultural context.

Whether due to the more settled postwar environment, the greater publicity of 1947-48, or Smith’s arguments for Rome’s relevance (however imprecise), interest in the Academy apparently exploded in 1948. According to the Valentines, the Academy received a record 137 applications for its Rome Prize fellowships in 1948, and by 1950, a record 28 fellows were in residence at the

Academy. Spero Daltas, fellow in architecture from 1949-1952, recalls that the Academy enjoyed a reputation as “the place to be” during these years: progressive, relevant, and sophisticated.

Despite the impressive resurgence during its first few postwar years of operation, efforts to advertise itself and its relevance continued in the 1950s. The first of these, by Ralph E. Griswold (FAAR 1920-23, Landscape Architecture), speaks specifically to the landscape architecture community. He outlines the history of landscape fellows at the institution, and also presents the postwar Academy as a congenial, stimulating, and ultimately productive environment, offering specific praise for the study projects of the current landscape fellows. That he is speaking to both the older and the newer generation is apparent from one of his more striking observations:

For those who remember the Academy in its monastic days, it would be quite a shock to see women participating in all the activities. The locked doors which used to separate the few women classicists from the main Academy section are now wide open; men and women, married and single, have the freedom of all facilities. It seems quite normal, as if it had always been that way; and surprisingly enough the atmosphere is congenial and conducive to work.

No one seems more astonished at the success of a fully co-educational Academy than Griswold himself. And his explanation of the value of Rome’s value is based upon a traditional framework: “observation of acknowledged masterpieces” in the form of villas, parks, and the other man-made landscapes which define much of Italy’s appeal: “The fury of speed has not yet overcome the natural feeling for beauty.” In describing residency at the Academy as pleasant and relevant for a

117 The creations of Fulbright fellowships in 1949 also benefited the Academy. By the mid-1950s several Fulbright fellows in the humanities and fine arts used the AAR as their base and occasionally held Fulbrights concurrently with Academy Fellowships or Residencies. Architecture Fellows with Fulbrights include: Dale Byrd (FAAR 1949-51), Spero Daltas (FAAR 1949-52), David Leavitt (FAAR 1950-51), Warren Platner (FAAR 1955-56), Astra Zarina (FAAR 1960-63) and Charles Stifter (FAAR 1961-63); see their respective files in Fellows Files: AAR Archives. Fulbright-holding Residents from this period included Allen Tate (RAAR 1954, literature) and Frederick Woodbridge (RAAR 1952, architecture). Trustee Franklin Watkins (1954-1958) was also at the Academy with a Fulbright fellowship in painting. Literature fellowships were also begun in 1950, supported by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, with the first going to Anthony Hecht (FAAR 1951). A. & L. Valentine, Academy, p. 112-115.
119 Ralph Griswold, “A Letter from Rome: Life at the American Academy Viewed by a Returning Fellow,” Landscape Architecture 40 (April 1950): 123-26. While not officially listed as a Resident, notable visitor, or otherwise, Griswold was at the Academy in some official capacity, since he makes reference to his “unburdensome Academy staff responsibilities.”
professional readership, he seeks to promote continued involvement by both his more established peers and younger, potential fellows.

An even more pointed attempt to address continuing doubts about the Academy’s relevance to the arts is found in a 1952 article published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* entitled “The American Academy in Rome: What is its Educational Value Today?” The title’s implication that the institution’s mission and function were being questioned is confirmed by the article’s telling prologue:

One hears an occasional remark from the younger generation in the profession, to the effect that a year spent in Rome is time wasted. What is the opinion of men who have been in the Academy and can look back over successful years of practice? We asked an architect, a painter, a sculptor and a landscape architect. Here are their answers.\(^{121}\)

The subsequent essays attempt to define the Academy’s relevance to contemporary art and architecture with far greater specificity than had been used by James K. Smith in 1948, and each of the four authors do so quite differently. The painter, Francis Scott Bradford (FAAR 1924-27), makes two main arguments: that the Rome Prize is one of very few scholarships available to painters (who need them desperately), and that association with Europe’s great artistic achievements is intrinsically stimulating and productive: “Painting inspires painting. Art, being progressive, builds on itself and, though its expression is through the individual, his ideas derive from the body of collected experience.” Bradford ignores the thorny problems of imitation and stylistic tradition; he defines the artistic value of Rome in terms of a mystical absorption of creative power: “Genius is inexplicable. It is magic. It reaches out to you from the canvas and grips you where you live.”\(^{122}\)

Sculptor Leo Friedlander (FAAR 1913-16) writes an ambivalent essay that only barely conceals a profound antipathy for the “world-wide upheaval that is influencing architecture and the allied arts to no small degree.” While acknowledging the need for the modern age to “express itself


with reasonable clarity,” he seems to be venting great resentment against “extreme” ideas that “should either have been mellowed or remained concealed in the laboratory recesses of the minds that fermented them.” His most specific complaint about the effects of these notions is contemporary architecture that suffers from “a coldness caused by the absence of sculpture and mural decoration.” The Academy offers a promising corrective through its “opportunities for sound progressive study and travel” and “a challenge for enlightened collaboration” among the arts “to help in the solution of our present great need to incorporate decoration in our modern buildings.” In Rome, the past is available for Fellows to study “with creative, not archeological, eyes, how the old masters solved the problems of their age so admirably.”

Despite Friedlander’s palpable antagonism for the modern movement, he attempts to sell the Academy through recourse to the ideal of the artistic Gesamtkunstwerk, one that had its own modernist tradition through the Arts and Crafts and the Bauhaus, and through an indirect appeal to the Hegelian Zeitgeist. History is not a pattern-book to be copied: history provides object lessons in modern problem-solving.

In his essay on landscape architecture, Norman T. Newton (FAAR 1923-26) is the only one of the four authors to make specific reference to the “anachronistic policies” which the Academy had abandoned a few years earlier: “No longer does the Fellow have to fight off the old insistence on idolatrous worship of the ‘classical’ past; no longer does he meet opposition in his natural desire to study works of today and to travel to ‘nonclassical’ lands. The Fellow now has freedom for self-development with his eyes wide open.” But he is equally critical of designers’ “ridiculous extreme” of overcompensating for decades of “arid eclecticism” by “looking down their noses at even the history of the creative arts, instead of realizing that the fault had lain not in these works of the past nor in their history but in the way knowledge of the past had been misused.” Italy is presented as an appropriate object of study for the current moment is one of “dynamic equilibrium,” where a

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designer can (to use his highly Giedionesque terms) “orient himself and his works clearly in space-
time.” He is the only author to connect Rome’s value to contemporary Italian art: “Where better than in modern Italy can one find so much progress being made by the arts of the twentieth century in the midst of so great and varied a richness of past achievement?”

The first (and therefore most prominent) essay in the series was contributed by an architect, 68-year-old Edgar J. Williams (FAAR 1909-12), who had served as an Academy Trustee from 1919-1937. Williams explicitly relates the question of the Academy’s current relevance to a debate from his years on the board: whether Rome was the source of a universally valid, superior form of art, versus the idea that “Roman gold was imitation gold and that the real stuff was to be found in Chicago…[or] even the Arizona desert” (a direct reference to Frank Lloyd Wright). Williams diagnosed the central problem as how best to create an authentically “American” architecture, and identifies two opposing points of view: the first, “[t]hat American architecture arose from the classic tradition and that the Academy offered an opportunity to seek knowledge of the roots of that tradition…” and the second “that a significant American architecture can spring only from the free pioneer spirit unhampered by tradition, and should be based upon the useful and structural qualities of the materials from which buildings are built,” thus summarizing opposing academic and modernist positions.

Williams then defines the merits of the Academy experience in rather different terms:

My opinion is that nowhere can a young man or woman find a comparable environment in which to test his own conception of art to that which is offered by Italy, steeped as it is in the accomplishments of great artists. Nowhere within the orbit of what might be called Western Culture would a creative artist be subjected to greater check in seeking to understand his own mind and the significance of his or her professional responsibility.

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124 The understanding of history, Italy, and the impact of Giedion will be explored further in Chapter 2.
126 Edgar Williams, “The American Academy in Rome: What is its Educational Value Today?” J.A.I.A. (July 1952): 23-25. The fact that Williams explicitly identifies his hypothetical fellow as a “young man or woman” is noteworthy given the recent end to overt gender discrimination in the arts.
This is what the Academy offers—a free breathing space in a young American’s life, without hardship or responsibility, permitting him to explore the treasures of the ages while associating with his fellow countrymen and women in the most charming surroundings. It is unimportant whether or not an architect, to cite one example, upon his return home conceives a fine building as a tower of steel and glass with none of the earmarks of classic ornament, provided he has, from his experience, derived some conviction from his stay in Rome, and has come to recognize, and learned to strive for, a superbness which is the dominant quality in all great works of art.127

Like Bradford, and also foreshadowing the 1994 essay by Giovannini discussed in the introduction to the present text, Williams saw no need to argue the benefits of a “free year” for any young artist’s creative development. That this free year might be spent in an aesthetically and socially congenial atmosphere, enriched by the “treasure of the ages,” simply amplifies the aura of pleasure usually associated with Rome (fig. 1.13).

The more pressing and challenging task for Williams’ essay was to reconcile two seemingly incommensurable problems, which again echo those posed by Giovannini: if modern art and architecture are predicated on individual creative freedom unrestrained by any particular site or tradition, why should this exploratory year be based in Rome? And, conversely, given that the perception of Rome is inextricably bound up with the historical and aesthetic models against which modernism defined itself, what could Rome possibly contribute to an artistic career in the 1950s that would not be an aesthetic and ideological corruption of its proper direction and subject matter?

The two most potent terms employed by Williams are “check” and “test.” In presenting Rome as a “check,” he defines it as a means of limiting the potential extremes of artistic individualism and relativism, the sort of forces that might lead to the extremes of purity bemoaned by Friedlander. Williams assumes that most aesthetically trained young people will recognize in the city’s works of art multiple and collective representations and embodiments of “superbness” (to use his neologism). He does not invoke names like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Bernini, but it is implied that such figures must of course be the “great artists” to which he refers. Like Bradford’s evocation

of “genius,” Williams makes a clever appeal to the creative ego—can one even imagine a young artist who would proclaim mere mediocrity as his or her highest aspiration? But it is an appeal that simultaneously resists and works to counter the contemporary emphasis on individual expression as the most fundamental source of aesthetic authenticity.\textsuperscript{128} Without stating explicitly that artistic quality is necessarily derived from the sort of discipline and Eurocentric historical consciousness embodied by the classical tradition, he does suggest that, as is memorably captured by Louis Sullivan’s account of his two days of personal rapture in the Sistine Chapel, a modern creative spirit (of sufficient quality and sensitivity) will find communion and growth in the company of the gods of art.\textsuperscript{129} In doing so, it subtly reinforces these works’ traditional status as masterpieces within the value system of contemporary art.

Besides confirming a longstanding, largely Italocentric cult of artistic genius, Williams presents Rome as a “test” for the essay’s hypothetical designers by implicitly linking artistic quality to temporal endurance. He suggests that Rome’s unarguably, incomparably rich concentration of historical structures will pose a unique challenge a young American artist. Taught to prioritize contemporary creative issues, the city invites the artist to consider whether his or her productions will have enduring value. This question recalls Leon Battista Alberti’s Renaissance argument that the great architecture ensures its own survival in the face of invading armies, who will spare a beautiful

\textsuperscript{128} This theme is of course manifest in a number of modern art movements, but perhaps most likely to have been familiar to Williams through Surrealism’s cult of the subconscious in the 1930s, receiving new prominence and importance in the early 1950s through the well-publicized work of Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Clyfford Still. See Irving Sandler’s \textit{Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism} (New York: Praeger, 1970). It is important to note that a handful of American artists of the 1950s, specifically Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly, would spend significant amounts of time in Rome during their prominent careers. In the case of Rauschenberg, the possible influence of Alberto Burri on his Black Paintings series is discussed by Germano Celant in \textit{Roma-New York, 1948-1964: An Art Exploration} (Milan: Charta, 1993), pp. 19-23.

\textsuperscript{129} Sullivan’s lyrical account of his encounter with Michelangelo is presented in his \textit{Autobiography of an Idea} (New York: Press of the American Institute of Architects), pp. 234-35. Published posthumously in 1924, it is an important, though highly dramatized, source of association between architecture’s avant-garde and travel in Rome that is contemporary with Le Corbusier’s \textit{Vers une architecture} of 1923. Both Sullivan and Le Corbusier’s views of Rome and precedent as modernist pilgrims will be discussed further in Chapter 2.
While the immense destruction of art-historically significant monuments and sites during World War II belies Alberti’s faith, for an American audience accustomed to much younger and more transient built environments, the survival and experience of structures like the Pantheon would strongly reinforce the connection between survival and quality. This backdrop of antiquity makes a dramatic rhetorical foil for Williams’ architectural reference to a glass and steel skyscraper, maximally “modern” in its suggestion of the recently constructed U.N. Secretariat and Lever House vertical slabs in New York. This juxtaposition disconnects the lessons of Rome from questions of style by stating that great architecture requires a historical consciousness, one that is capable of conceiving structures worthy of endurance for centuries, for millennia.

By promoting the city as a unique instructor in artistic quality and significance, Williams cleverly links the lessons of Rome to postwar American artists’ most fundamental aspirations.

Similar language would be used in the Academy’s Rome Prize Brochure for 1954-1955, which states:

Besides the advantage of living and working in the city which has perhaps the greatest architectural traditions in the world, the fellow in architecture has the unique possibility to see European architecture of the past and the present, to observe the new techniques European builders are developing, and to learn, through study and travel, what meaning this architecture of the past and the present has for his own work.

This language echoes Williams’ choice of themes that were consonant with modernism but sufficiently universal to avoid offending even the most vehemently anti-modern Academicians.

Williams also, perhaps inadvertently, echoes the more authoritative (to younger architects, at least)

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130 The specific citation is from Book VI.2 of Alberti’s *De Re Aedificatoria*: “Beauty may even influence an enemy, by restraining his anger and so preventing the work from being violated. Thus I might be so bold to state: No other means is as effective in protecting a work from damage and human injury as is dignity and grace of form.” Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Rykwert, Leach, and Tavernor (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 156.

131 The problem of defining an “authentic” encounter with history is of course far more complex, especially since so much of Italy’s architectural “history” made visually available for visitors in the late twentieth century was carefully and selectively excavated, restored, reframed, or even reconstructed during the years of Italy’s National and Fascist eras. See the discussion in chapter 3 below.

132 See “American Academy in Rome, Fine Arts and Classical Studies: Rome Prize Fellowships 1954-1955,” in the Louis I. Kahn Collection, Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania. For many years after his residency, Mary Williams sent Kahn brochures to distribute among promising students and employees.
presentation of Rome by Le Corbusier in *Vers une architecture*. The chapter entitled “The Lesson of Rome” condemns the city as too chaotic and too ornate. He concludes the chapter with an explicit warning: “The lesson of Rome is for wise men, for those who know and can appreciate, who can resist and can verify. Rome is the damnation of the half-educated. To send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life.”

While Le Corbusier’s warning suggests the city should be avoided altogether, at least by younger architects, this message is belied by the amount of text and imagery the author devotes to Rome’s monuments. While some of the city’s monuments are presented negatively as architectural counterexamples, others—most notably the Pantheon, Hadrian’s Villa, and Michelangelo’s work at St. Peter’s—are described as exemplary. As he did for Sullivan, Michelangelo serves as Le Corbusier’s prototype for the individual creative genius (and his thinly veiled belief that he holds the same status in his own age). He invokes Hadrian’s Villa and the Pantheon to praise ancient Roman engineers’ structurally and sculpturally innovative forms, whose true beauty is best seen in ruins, stripped of obfuscating decorative veneers. Monuments like the Pantheon must be visually edited and abstracted to be truly “seen,” a process literalized in Le Corbusier’s doctored photographs that remove altars, paintings, and other “distractions” from pure form. He writes as if he would have gladly stripped the actual monument of its polychrome stone revetment, declaring “Let us retain, from these Romans, their bricks and their Roman cement and their Travertine and we will sell the Roman marble to the millionaires.” These statements echo Friedlander’s appeal to “observe with creative, not archaeological eyes.” *Towards a New Architecture* celebrates the aesthetic power of the ruin, of pure naked form, and even provides a list of materials worthy of re-appropriation. Thirty

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134 *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 159.
years before Williams, Le Corbusier constructed a modernist vision of Rome as the ultimate test: beneath its perilous surfaces lies true inspiration for those equipped with eyes that can see.

The ‘50s Academy from Without

While the published apologiae of 1948 and 1952 were produced by the Academy for public consumption, an outsider’s observation of the Academy for a broad, general audience was published a few years later. Essayist Sylvia Wright’s “Rome’s Most Favored Tourists,” provides a measure of the extent to which the Academy’s self-fashioning efforts had succeeded by 1956. Her portrait of the Academy confirms its somewhat curious nature as a “Parnassus” where “scholars mingle with artists, relative beginners with well-known names in art and music.” The presence of classicists in Rome requires (and receives) little justification, since, even for those whose projects are not located in the city, “a knowledge of Rome is invaluable to a future teacher in the field.” Wright also describes the different reception of similar opportunities by scholars and artists:

Artists, according to the classicists, are uninformed (“If you haven’t read Horace, seeing his Sabine farm doesn’t mean much”) and unused to doing homework. Like children, they get bored quickly. After four or five tombs at the Etruscan necropolis at Tarquinia, the artists begin to flag, while the classicists plod doggedly through fifteen or more. Or so the classicists say.

The classicists’ interest in all things ancient is intrinsic to their discipline. It is the artists, bored by too many Etruscan tombs, whose presence in Rome requires justification and explanation.

Wright lists the artists who had been in residence since the war: “composers Aaron Copeland, Samuel Barber, and Nicolas Nabokov, painters Franklin Watkins and Henry Varnum Poor, and architect George Howe.” In doing so she echoes the function of its residency program by associating the Academy with famous names, which in this case simultaneously asserts its artistic

135 Published in The Reporter (July 12, 1956): 40-42.
relevance for certain fields while highlighting its lack in others (especially painting—what a different effect a name like Jackson Pollock might have had).\textsuperscript{137} Wright also points out both the extent and the limits of interdisciplinary interaction and inspiration: while specifically lauding the opportunity for artists to be inspired by a new, deeper exposure to ancient objects, sites, and literature, she points out that joint projects between artists “generally do not work out.”\textsuperscript{138}

Rome is, of course, an artistic problem which can take many forms. “A demanding, undermining love affair” that can be either too stimulating or torpor-inducing, a place “where we hope some aesthetic or spiritual lightning will strike us” which also proves to be profoundly disquieting to Americans imbued with a sort of “culturally intrinsic” pragmatism:

What is more pointless than a curling Baroque façade, half of which backs empty air? Why paint impeccable trompe-l’œil columns around a room? If you want columns, why not real ones? and they had better hold up the roof. There is little modern architecture in Rome, except the railroad station, to inspire young architects directly. Some of them, wandering through the undemocratically spacious Renaissance palaces, see only waste. And to some artists, the endless angels, golden clouds, gilt, and garlands of Rome are more than purposeless; they are belligerently so. How curious that at the same time they attract, with a pull the more subtle because Rome does not care at all whether you love it or not.\textsuperscript{139}

Wright finally locates Rome’s artistic relevance in influences that escape the limits of style and surface. “For an architect the life of Rome, lived out of doors with piazzas for living rooms, induces reflections on what we may have lost through the gridiron construction of our cities.” And her

\textsuperscript{137} Pollock had disavowed the need to work in Europe in 1944; see Jackson Pollock, “Answers to a Questionnaire,” \textit{Arts and Architecture} 61 (Feb. 1944); reprinted in Harrison and Wood, eds., \textit{Art in Theory 1900-1990}, p. 560. Only one major Abstract Expressionist, Mark Rothko, is recorded as a “Notable Visitor” to the Academy some time between 1943-1951; see his entry in Kohl, et al., \textit{Centennial Directory}. Germano Celant mistakenly implies that Rothko was there in a longer and more official capacity (“Likewise in 1948, Philip Guston, winner of the Prix de Rome, spent a year at the American Academy, and was then followed by Rothko in 1950;” Celant, \textit{Roma-New York}, p. 18. This visit must have occurred during his first trip to Europe in the summer of 1950, when he stayed in Rome for four weeks as part of a longer tour through France and Italy. This trip is discussed (with no mention of the Academy) by James Breslin in \textit{Mark Rothko: a Biography} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 283-287. See also Giovanni Carandente, “Mark Rothko’s Three Italian Journeys,” in Oliver Wick, ed., \textit{Rothko} (Milan: Skira, 2007). Other essays in this exhibition catalog discuss Rothko’s artistic relationship with both traditional Italian art and contemporary Italian cinema: see esp. Oliver Wick’s “Do they negate each other, modern and classical?” Mark Rothko, Italy, and the Yearning for Tradition” and Jeffrey Weiss, “Temps Mort: Rothko and Antonioni.” Other major names from the world of contemporary art to visit the Academy between 1943-1955 are Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Rene d’Harnancourt (both of MoMA), John Cage, and Isamu Noguchi.

\textsuperscript{138} Wright, “Tourists,” p. 41.

\textsuperscript{139} Wright, “Tourists,” p. 42.
greatest compliment is directed towards the way the Academy’s administration has embraced a completely relaxed relationship to its artists, describing it as

…painstakingly sympathetic to the idea that a Fellow, however earnest, may produce nothing very definite in his first year. In fact, the Juries of Selection…try to choose people who are not too old to be impressionable. At the Academy, this hands-off policy is in the able hands of the present director, Laurance Page Roberts, formerly of the Brooklyn Museum, who presides with detachment, humor, and grace.\textsuperscript{140}

Wright’s essay provides a thoughtful meditation on the Academy’s chosen direction for the Reporter’s educated readership. Without denying that Rome was a peripheral rather than a central location for contemporary cultural production, she illustrates its benefits and relevance. While using the same sort of general terms the Academy had established in 1948 and 1952, her description gives these a greater sense of vitality. Wright regards its privileged position with a slightly skeptical eye, but ultimately accepts the Academy’s argument for its own significance. She concludes with an ironic proposition that a similar but charitable institution should be established for millionaires, rather than artists and scholars, in the hope that they would commission the same sort of Roman environment which those at the Academy are learning to appreciate. In doing so, Wright (perhaps unwittingly) replicates the original pact between wealth, knowledge, and creativity that had established the Academy a half-century earlier.\textsuperscript{141}

Wright also explains why Americans should look to Rome in terms that reflect immediate cultural and political priorities: “Our republic is established, our world power consolidated; we have reached a level of national maturity.” The notion of “cultural maturity” and its implications for the relationship between America’s newly confident postwar position and its adoption of Rome as a model in the 1950s will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Before doing so, however, I shall consider

\textsuperscript{140} Wright, “Tourists,” p. 41.
\textsuperscript{141} The Academy has honored with the title of “Founders” a set of ten individuals and institutions who gave gifts of $100,000 or more beginning in 1904. These are: J.P. Morgan, Henry Walters, William K. Vanderbilt, Henry C. Frick, Harvard College, John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Jr., The Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and Charles F. McKim (who was honored posthumously by gifts totaling that amount pledged in his memory). This list makes the Academy’s association with American wealth sufficiently apparent.
how Rome’s architectural relevance was understood by the Fellows whose presence was a response to, an affirmation of, and an extension of the Academy’s new image. Forty young architects interrupted their careers to spend a year or more in Rome from 1947-1966. As we have seen, the Academy had labored, in print and in policy, to clarify, explain and defend the benefits of a sojourn in Rome for modern architects. The identities, projects, and interests of the Fellows themselves provide a further view into how the city and the institution were absorbed, understood, and redefined in the postwar years.
Fig. 1.1: American Academy in Rome Dining Room, 1948 [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library].
Fig. 1.2: Isabel Roberts and Alfred H. Barr, Villa Aurelia, 1948 [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library].

Fig. 1.3: Music Room, Villa Aurelia, 1948 [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library]
Fig. 1.4: George Howe, Rome, 1948 [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library]

Fig. 1.5: Howe and Lescaze, Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Building, Philadelphia, 1929-32 [Jordy, “PSFS”]
Fig. 1.6: Eliel and Eero Saarinen and Robert Swanson, Smithsonian design [Kornwolf, Modernism in America 1937-1941]

Fig. 1.7: Walker Cain in Academy Studio [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library]
Fig. 1.8: 1947 Alumni Association Flier [Walker O. Cain Papers, Avery]
STUDIO PARTY
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION of the AMERICAN ACADEMY in ITALIA
ROMA 1950

Menu
Cocktails
Dinner (at VINO)
The Coop
Loni Lupi

Wives
Husbands
Boon Companions
are cordially invited
JANUARY 27
cocktails at 6:30 PM
PALAZZO ALLYN COX
VIA E. 40 135

Special guests will include
Director Mrs. Lawrence Roberts

Cain 5:13

Fig. 1.9: 1950 Alumni Association Flier [Walker O. Cain Papers, Avery]
Fig. 1.10: Undated (March 9, 1951?) Alumni Association Flier [Walker O. Cain Papers, Avery]
Fig. 1.11: Concetta Scaravaglione in Academy Studio [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library]

Fig. 1.12: Marion Kelleher, Dorothy Swope, Joe Kelleher, Helen Thon, Bill Thon, George Howe, Concetta Searavglione at Bar Gianicolo, ca. 1948 [Roberts Papers, Berenson Library]
Chapter 2: Modern Architects as Rome Prize Fellows

Architecture Schools and the Postwar Rome Prize

As shown in the previous chapter, the American Academy in Rome made concerted efforts in the mid-1940s to redefine itself for a postwar era dominated by modern rather than historicist architecture. How successful would this “new” Academy prove to be in attracting ambitious young architects? More to the point, who were they, and what was the nature of their interest in the Rome Prize? The reciprocal relationship between the Academy and the projects and individuals drawn into its fold helps demarcate the points of continuity and the degree of change in the institution’s architectural role. The Academy’s postwar architectural identity was necessarily contingent upon the identities and future careers of the Rome Prize winners themselves. Indelibly marked by their schools, their professors, and their employers, it is they who most enduringly constituted the Academy’s chosen architectural present and future at mid-century.

Between 1894-1940, a period of forty-six years, the Rome Prize in architecture was awarded to a total of thirty men.¹ In contrast, forty architects would receive fellowships in the nineteen years between 1947-1966, an increase in distribution caused in part by the gradual reduction of the Rome Prize term from three years to one between 1935 and 1947.² Before World War II, most Rome Prize architects came from a select handful of elite schools: ten had graduated from Columbia, seven from

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¹ This “official” number does exclude Victor L. S. Hafner, who was awarded a Rome Prize in architecture for 1922. Fikret K. Yegül recounts this only known instance of damnatio memoriae at the Academy: two Collaborative projects on which Hafner participated in 1923 and 1924 were judged so scandalously unorthodox in their eclectic combinations of non-classical styles (including Chinese, Assyrian, Egyptian, and Baroque elements) that he was formally stripped of his Rome Prize, an incident that helped motivate the Credo. See Yegül’s Gentlemen of Instinct and Breeding: Architecture at the American Academy in Rome, 1894-1940 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 72-79.

² Beginning in 1947, Rome Prize fellowships were officially awarded for one year. However, fellows were able to request a one-year renewal (which most did), so they often remained at the Academy for two years. In addition, many combined fellowships from other sources, such as the Fulbright commission, so in a few cases their residence in Rome extended as long as three years.
Yale, five from the University of Pennsylvania, and three from MIT—a total of twenty-five out of thirty, or 83.3% of the whole, from four institutions. The remainder had architecture degrees from Cornell (two) and Harvard, Catholic University, and Princeton (one each).\(^3\) During these years, Yale and Penn were generally considered the top Beaux-Arts programs in the U.S., followed by MIT and Columbia.\(^4\) Columbia’s location in New York City, in convenient proximity to McKim, Mead and White, the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, and the Academy’s headquarters, all of which shared extensive support networks among the city’s wealthy, made it especially well positioned to compete for fellowships.\(^5\)

The postwar period would see a marked redistribution of the Rome Prize among U.S. architecture schools. Both Columbia and Penn, two of the design programs most strongly connected to the Academy before the war, would be nearly shut out; no Columbia graduates, and only one from Penn, were awarded architecture fellowships between 1947-1966. These schools are mainly noteworthy during the immediate postwar years because they were somewhat slower to modernize than other institutions. From 1933-35, Dean Joseph Hudnut had attempted to revamp the Columbia program before departing for the more receptive Harvard, but his successor Leopold Arnaud reversed the department’s direction and charted its highly traditionalist path until his retirement in 1959.\(^6\) The program at Penn remained under relatively conservative leadership until 1951, when it

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\(^4\) Robert A. M. Stern characterizes Yale and Penn as “the leading American schools of architecture” of the 1920s-1930s; see “Yale 1950-1965,” *Oppositions* 4 (October 1974) p. 36. Both MIT and Columbia had been founded by William Ware, in 1865 and 1881, respectively. Ware had apprenticed with Richard Morris Hunt, the first American to study architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and was generally supportive of the Beaux-Arts educational methodology. However, he was interestingly resistant to McKim’s strict conception of the Rome Prize as a period of closely controlled and supervised architectural study. See Yegül, *Gentlemen*, p. 52.

\(^5\) One example of these interrelationships is the career of Austin W. Lord: employed by McKim Mead and White in the 1890s, he was the first director of the American School of Architecture in Rome from 1894-5, and later served as head of the Columbia Department of Architecture from 1912-1915.

would change direction under G. Holmes Perkins (1904-2004). Perkins was the former chair of Harvard’s Department of City Planning, where had worked closely with Hudnut and Gropius in modernizing that program. As head of Penn’s School of Fine Arts, he inaugurated its own curricular modernization process. While two prominent figures associated with the Academy, Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi, would teach at Penn beginning in the late 1950s, only one graduate of the program received a Rome Prize in architecture from 1947-1966, in 1961.

It is the Academy’s postwar association with one school in particular that most convincingly marks its embrace of modern architecture after World War II, even more decisively than its policy revisions or the residency of George Howe. Between 1947-1966, twelve out of the forty Rome Prize fellowships awarded (30%) went to graduates of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (GSD), a far greater number than any other school. Prior to 1940, Harvard had only produced one Rome Prize winner, in 1909. Its students’ unequaled postwar success in fellowship competitions demonstrates how differently architectural qualifications and promise were being measured at the Academy, since the stylistic and design methodologies taught at Harvard had changed dramatically by 1947. As much as any other decision of the postwar period, that the Academy awarded most of its Rome Prize fellowships to GSD graduates was an emphatic announcement of its embrace of modern architecture as the discipline’s future direction.

7 The program at Penn was synonymous with the venerable Paul Cret until his death in 1945. His immediate successor was the conservative architect (and Academy Fellow from 1926-29) Arthur F. Deam served as department chair from 1945-50. When the School of Fine Arts became a graduate division in 1958, Perkins became its first dean, a position he held until 1971. For a summary of Perkins’ influential career, see the obituary published in the Society of Architectural Historians Newsletter (October 2004): 19.


9 Kahn began teaching at Penn in 1955, and Venturi taught there from 1957-1965. The one Rome Prize fellow to graduate from Penn during these years was Robert Golder (FAAR 1961-63).

10 Before 1940, most Rome Prize winners had attended only one school of architecture, whereas many postwar fellows had educational experience at or degrees from more than one institution. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, I consider the school where a fellow’s terminal degree is earned to be the most statistically significant. A number of interesting patterns can be observed by looking at the fellows’ educational backgrounds more completely, such as the six fellows who had been undergraduates at the University of Minnesota. But in all but six cases, these architects won their Rome Prize fellowships after they had completed Ivy League graduate programs in architecture.
The appointment of Walter Gropius as Chair of Architecture at the GSD in 1937 is undoubtedly one of the most pivotal events in the history of twentieth-century architectural education. Soon joined at Harvard by Marcel Breuer, and followed by Mies van der Rohe at Chicago’s Armour Institute (later the Illinois Institute of Technology) in 1938, Gropius was one of a significant number of former Bauhaus directors, instructors, and students of the Staatliches Bauhaus (1919-1933, in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin) to come to the U.S. after that school was closed under pressure from the Nazis. But while Mies and Breuer would become more prominent as design practitioners, Gropius’ presence at Harvard was the most symbolically significant for the direction of architectural education. Gropius was the Bauhaus’s founder, its first director (from 1919-1926), and the designer of its iconic Dessau headquarters (1925-26). The school’s teaching methods were developed in a deliberate and conscious departure from academic tradition. Both its aesthetics and its efforts to break down established hierarchies between “fine” and “applied” arts were intended to be both aesthetically and socially revolutionary. While officially supported and sanctioned by Germany’s Weimar government, the Bauhaus was a decidedly, avant-garde, even revolutionary institution.

This small, radical school was one of the most highly visible and influential crucibles of artistic modernism, and Gropius’ polemical writings presented its evolving artistic and educational philosophies and methodologies to the public during his tenure. When Dean Joseph Hudnut came

12 Other prominent Bauhäusler who came to the U.S. include László Moholy-Nagy, Josef and Anni Albers, Lyonel Feininger, and Ludwig Hilbersheimer.
13 Gropius did of course practice both independently and, after 1945, as part of The Architects’ Collaborative (TAC). But while TAC would remain famously associated with Gropius, its philosophical emphasis creative teamwork worked deliberately against the Randian image of the single designer. For an important study of one of the most controversial and ideologically tainted projects of Gropius’ later career, see Meredith Clausen’s *The Pan Am Building and the Shattering of the Modernist Dream* (Cambridge and London: the MIT Press, 2004).
to Harvard to create a new, unified, and intentionally modern Graduate School of Design, the selection of Gropius to be Director of the Department of Architecture signified that the Modern Architecture promoted five years earlier at MoMA’s *International Style* exhibition was no longer an extreme, fringe movement. The depth of the architectural revolution at Harvard itself is sometimes overstated; the program established there by Herbert Langford Warren had a far less orthodox relationship to the American Beaux-Arts system than those of Yale, Penn, MIT or Columbia, and its explicit embrace of the Modern Movement had begun under Hudnut in 1935. But in the same way that Harvard conferred much of its educational, institutional, and cultural legitimacy to the modernist cause (which would also transform the International Style into an academic modernism and the postwar mainstream), the presence of Gropius also lent the GSD a crucial stamp of avant-garde legitimacy. This curious pairing of intentionally revolutionary aesthetics to one of the oldest, richest, and most elite of U.S. universities also added weight to the belief, still held by only a small minority of practicing architects in 1937, that modernism was the way of the future. Its establishment at the Ivy League would also further the movement’s evolution away from its past role as the design language of socialist housing projects in 1920s Europe towards that of capitalist skyscrapers for American corporations in the 1950s.

The 1930s saw extended discussion among architects about their discipline’s system of education, a topic that would continue to receive much attention through the early 1950s. The palpable exhaustion of the Beaux-Arts methodology and its apparent irrelevance to Depression-era realities sparked considerable professional introspection during the 1930s. One formal study of

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17 Over thirty articles dealing with design education were published in one journal alone, the *J.A.I.A.*, between 1944-53.
architectural education had already been published as a book in 1932, just as the MoMA exhibition would give the issue increased visibility. The dramatic transformation of Harvard’s program under Hudnut had given the GSD a visible, vanguard position in this debate. Gropius, already synonymous with its most revolutionary and polemical wing, contributed his celebrity status, became a lightning rod in the question of architecture’s future. Any discussion of design education after 1937 was inevitably colored by his tenure at Harvard.

For almost two decades, graduates of this storied program would not only dominate the American profession, but see greatest success with the Rome Prize juries. The numerical dominance of Harvard-educated architects at the Academy can be read in many different ways. GSD students might have applied for the Rome Prize in greater numbers than any other school, and thus received accordingly higher representation, although there is no way to determine this. Regardless, it is both evident and surprising that the school launched so many of its graduates towards Rome. To understand how and why this occurred requires a more detailed consideration of what these architects’ specific interests were and how they may have related to the GSD curriculum. It also requires a better understanding of how distinct these interests were compared to the Fellows’ colleagues from other institutions. A second possible hypothesis is that the Academy’s decisions simply reflect the fact that the country’s most talented young designers were drawn to and emerged from Harvard’s famous program (whether their excellence was intrinsic or inculcated there), and therefore its applicants were of intrinsically and recognizably higher quality. This approach raises the very difficult problem of quantifying and ranking artistic talent and performance, always embedded in the sticky realm of culturally conditioned criteria. What can be stated reasonably is that given the

19 A clear measure of the GSD’s perceived importance that it has been the subject of two recent book-length studies, both of which emphasize its place in the establishing Modern Architecture in the U.S.: Alofsin’s *The Struggle for Modernism* of 2002 and Jill Pearlman’s *Inventing American Modernism* of 2007.
20 The American Academy in Rome has only retained the application records of the Rome Prize winners from this period, not all submitted entries, so statistics on all applicants cannot be determined.
GSD’s prominence, the fame of the school and its prominent leaders must have carried considerable weight.

To frame this hypothesis differently, the mid-century Academy may have been especially well-disposed to favor applicants from Harvard, whether because they approved of the sorts of interests and projects developed by its graduates, out of deference to its reputation, or because it sought to associate itself with the school and ride on its architectural coattails. The relationship appears to have been rather asymmetrical: while GSD graduates and the Academy embraced each other warmly, its famous design faculty had almost no involvement. They appear in the records primarily as the authors of letters of recommendation: Walter Gropius and his successor José Lluis Sert (GSD Dean from 1953-69) wrote letters for five of the twelve GSD students to receive the Rome Prize in architecture (four by Gropius, one by Sert). But neither they, nor any of the Harvard design faculty, were involved with the Academy as either a resident, visitor, or Rome Prize juror. It appears the Academy had a much greater interest in associating itself with the Harvard architecture program than the reverse. Given the iconic position occupied by the GSD as mid-century America’s flagship school of modern architecture, this suggests that the Rome Prize jurors, at least, sought to align the Academy with the discipline’s new direction.

After Harvard, the other most-represented schools among Rome Prize winners in architecture from 1947-1966 are Yale (eight), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, six) and Princeton (five). Along with Harvard’s twelve, this replicates the prewar pattern, where the lion’s share (in this case, thirty-one out of forty, or 77.5%) of architecture Rome Prizes went to just

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21 The four fellows with letters from Gropius are Frederic Coolidge (1947-48), Charles D. Wiley (1947-48), James Lamantia (1948-49), and Robert L. Myers (1953-54). Thomas N. Larson (FAAR 1962-64) had a letter of recommendation from Sert, and also in his file a letter of introduction from Gropius to Le Corbusier so that Larson could visit his office. Larson worked with Gropius as a member of TAC. See Fellows Files: Larson, Thomas N., 1962-64; American Academy in Rome Archives, New York, New York (hereafter “AAR Archives”).

22 The only faculty member directly involved would be Sigfried Giedion, who taught history at the GSD beginning in 1954, and would be scholar in residence in Art History at the Academy in 1966. See Sigfried Giedion, s.v., Kohl et al., Centennial Directory.
four schools. This is a significant point of continuity from the Academy’s prewar period, when it was aligned with a similar set of elite, Northeastern, Ivy-League institutions (of which two, Yale and MIT, remained the same). Such schools collectively defined the most elite form of architectural education, although as seen in the case of Harvard, they did so in radically different terms. The two schools that maintained their close relationship were able to do so because they mirrored the changes at the Academy—or vice-versa.

Yale, which produced the second greatest number of Rome Prize winners in architecture both before and after World War II, provides an intriguing case study.23 The year 1947 was pivotal in the parallel and intertwined trajectories of change at both institutions. At the Academy, of course, this was the year it reopened and welcomed George Howe and the Modern Architecture he personified. At Yale, 1947 saw the retirement of Everett V. Meeks, chair of Yale’s Department of Architecture since 1916 and Dean of its School of Fine Arts since 1922. Meeks had also served as an Academy Trustee from 1928-47, the period when all seven of Yale’s prewar Rome Prize winners won their fellowships.24 But despite its reputation as a flagship Beaux-Arts school, the period of Meeks’ deanship saw a certain degree of stylistic flexibility. Two prominent Beaux-Arts trained American practitioners of Art Deco-style modernism taught there during the 1930s: Raymond Hood (1930-1934) and Wallace K. Harrison (1937-1940).25

After Meeks’ retirement, the architecture department spent two years under transitional leadership, with internal conflicts about its future course dividing a still largely Beaux-Arts permanent faculty from the more modernist visiting critics, who included Edward Durrell Stone

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23 See also the discussion of Yale’s transition in Carter Weisman, Louis I. Kahn: Beyond Time and Style (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), pp. 54-64.
24 While 1947 is occasionally given as the year of Meeks’ death, he actually died in 1954; see his obituary in the New York Times (October 28, 1954).
As at the Academy, it was the selection of George Howe that marked a decisive declaration of support for a modern architectural curriculum. According to Robert A. M. Stern, Howe’s appointment as chair was a carefully considered and deliberately chosen response to Gropius:

Louis Kahn, who as senior critic had instigated this move, felt that the luster of Howe’s reputation would establish a new tone, bringing to Yale an American architect of first rank who had been associated with the Modern Movement. Howe was an architect with an international reputation and, though a confirmed modernist, he was not in any specific way associated with the Bauhaus scene, neither in Germany nor in its various American transplantations at Harvard, at the Institute for Design in Chicago or at Black Mountain College in North Carolina….With the appointment of Howe, then, it seems clear that the Yale School was destined to carve out a pedagogical position for itself that was different from Harvard’s but of equal caliber.26

Howe assumed his chairmanship on January 1, 1950 and served until 1955.27 Stern’s summation of what Howe’s name signified in 1950 captures succinctly his unique value as a figurehead, both at Yale and at the Academy, two essentially conservative institutions making transitions to a more “modern” era.

Howe arrived at Yale directly from his Academy residency, and he would serve as the department chair until his retirement in 1954. At Yale, as at the Academy and so many places before, his legendary charm and diplomacy (characterized by a former student as “constructive cynicism and sophistication”) helped smooth the acceptance of Modern Architecture in a traditionalist institution.28 In addition to Kahn, who continued to teach at Yale until 1959, Howe would invite Philip Johnson and Eero Saarinen (also a 1934 Yale graduate) to serve as visiting critics during his tenure. Since Saarinen also visited the Academy in 1951, this means that all four of the most famous architects teaching at Yale in the early 1950s also had direct connections to the Academy.

26 Kahn was initially appointed to replace Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who was denied a visa for his Communist sympathies. See Weiseman, Kahn, p. 56.
28 Significantly, painter Josef Albers, who was entirely associated with both the “Bauhaus scene” and Black Mountain College, became a visiting critic in Yale’s Department of Art in fall of 1949, and Chair of the new Department of Design in June of 1950. See Stern, “Yale 1950-1965,” p. 37 and Weiseman, Kahn, p. 59-60.
As Stern indicates above, the design program at Yale sought to define itself as “modern,” but not merely cast in the Harvard-Bauhaus mold. Both schools claimed an interdisciplinary philosophy, but the GSD emphasized architects’ collaboration with fields such as urban planning, landscape architecture, and the social sciences. The design program at Yale was more closely allied with the visual arts, which underwent their own reorientation under Josef Albers from 1949-58.\(^{30}\) In that sense, Yale’s brand of modernism embodied a certain ideological continuity from the Beaux-Arts by teaching architecture as one of the interdependent Fine Arts. Stylistically, its postwar legacy is more eclectic than the sort of doctrinaire, “decorated diagram” functionalism for which Harvard became famous.\(^{31}\)

Like Yale, MIT was a program whose switch to modern architectural teaching both followed and deliberately departed from Harvard’s lead. Founded in 1868, MIT’s school of architecture had the distinction of being the oldest in the U.S., and it had adhered firmly to the Beaux-Arts system until 1939.\(^{32}\) Ultimately, the new direction of MIT’s postwar architecture program would be shaped by a sequence of several key figures, all very different from both Gropius and Howe. After a transitional period during the war years, MIT’s initial turn was inaugurated by the 1945 arrival of William Wurster, who had established a national reputation through his California-based practice, especially Bay Area houses that combined simple, regional forms, humble materials and a luxuriously

\(^{30}\) Albers had served as a visiting critic at Yale since fall of 1949, and became chair of the art department in June of 1950. See Stern, “Yale 1950-1965,” p. 37. Stern’s emphasis on Yale’s detachment from the postwar “American Bauhaus” system is strictly applicable to architecture only, in light of Albers’ long presence and enduring influence at Yale. See also Sarah Williams Goldhagen’s discussion of the relationship between Yale’s art and architecture programs in Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 41-63.

\(^{31}\) Klaus Herdeg was the first author to discuss the Harvard legacy in such terms in his book The Decorated Diagram: Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1983).

relaxed approach to site and climate. According to Lawrence Anderson, “William Wurster revitalized the MIT School of Architecture and brought it into prominence as a center where modernism could flourish.”

In 1943, Wurster had moved to Cambridge to begin a Ph.D. in City Planning at Harvard, during which time he was also invited to teach at Yale. Two years later Wurster was invited to become MIT’s new architecture dean, a position he would hold until 1950. But the flavor of modern architecture he brought was distinct from Harvard’s neo-Bauhaus, and inflected by not only his own regionalist tendencies, but the impact of his most admired European master, Alvar Aalto, whom Wurster had first met in Finland in 1937. Aalto had been appointed to an MIT professorship in the summer of 1940, but returned to Finland that October because of the war. At Wurster’s invitation, he resumed his MIT position from 1945-48, and also designed and built the idiosyncratic Baker House Dormitory (1946-1949) for MIT during these same years. While neither Wurster’s and Aalto’s associations with the school were longstanding, the leadership of a prominent American modernist and presence of an increasingly respected European pioneer gave the school its own respectable standing as a school of modern architecture. That both men were associated with

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35 According to Anderson, Wurster made no secret of his desire to return to the Bay Area, which he did when offered the deanship at U.C. Berkeley in 1950.


37 This was meant to be for three months of the year, to conduct research and teach advanced students. See Ray, Aalto, p. 42 and Göran Schildt, Alvar Aalto: The Mature Years, trans. T. Binham (New York: Rizzoli, 1989) p. 28-40.

38 Aalto had a flexible appointment at MIT for two two-month periods per year. During these years Aalto was also offered a professorship at Harvard and received an honorary doctorate from Princeton. After returning to Finland in 1948 due to the illness and death of his wife Aino, he remained there to focus on two major projects. He formally ended his MIT position in 1950. See Ray, Aalto, p. 46-47 and Schildt, Aalto, p. 96-107, 117-129.

39 Although one of Aalto’s buildings (the Turun Sansomat Building in Åbo, Finland of 1930) was included in Hitchcock and Johnson’s International Style, his reputation grew very gradually in the 1930s-1940s. Despite a 1938 MoMA exhibition
“alternative” strands of the modern movement also helped MIT emerge from Harvard’s shadow; Rome Prize Fellow Spero Daltas (’49-51), for instance, specifically chose to attend MIT because he preferred Aalto over Gropius as a model and mentor.40

When Wurster left MIT to become Dean of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, he was replaced by another West Coast colleague, the Portland, Oregon-based Pietro Belluschi. Like Wurster, Belluschi was known for a body of regionally inflected modern houses in Oregon and Washington State, as well as the technologically innovative skyscraper, the Equitable Building in Portland (1944-48). He thus embodied a design sensibility similar to that of Wurster, although his later career would emphasize commercial rather than residential designs. He would also become a much more fully integrated part of the East Coast architectural establishment.41 Belluschi, who served as MIT’s dean until 1965, would also be an influential senior link to the Academy during the postwar years. He served as an Architect in Residence at the Academy in 1953-4, and also served on at least one Rome Prize jury soon thereafter, in 1955.42

The final architecture school to enjoy a close relationship with the Academy is Princeton. Like Harvard, it had educated only one prewar Rome Prize Fellow, but enjoyed a much closer relationship with the Academy after the war. In contrast to the GSD, however, that relationship

40 Daltas also recalls that Aalto encouraged him to travel to Italy rather than Scandinavia for inspiration, and writes in his application statement that Aalto brought out drawings of St. Peter’s square to explain design principles in studio. Interview with author, 24 April, 1 and 14 May 2007, and Spero Daltas, Statement of Purpose; Fellows Files: Daltas, Spero, 1949-51; AAR Archives. Aalto’s formal interest in classical antiquity, especially the Greek theater, is well known; elsewhere, Spanish architect Fernando Chueca described Aalto’s attitude towards Italian architecture differently: “In Italy, he closes his eyes to the monuments of the Renaissance and the Baroque, and seeks only the essence of the Mediterranean tradition. He is interested in the spontaneous planning of villages and small towns, especially in the mountains.” Cited in Schildt, Aalto, p. 149.

41 Belluschi, who was born in and lived in Italy until 1923, made frequent visits to Rome to visit his mother there. His archive, held at Syracuse University, holds no direct correspondence between him and the Academy. See Meredith Clausen, Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994). He would exercise an especially influential role in shaping the U.S.’s architectural image overseas, to be discussed further in chapter three, within the context of the residency program and contemporary practice.

42 A note on one of the documents in the application file of Dan Stewart (FAAR 1955-57), an MIT graduate, states that he was “known personally to Dean Pietro Belluschi, of MIT, a member of the Architecture Jury, who spoke for him.” See Fellows Files: Stewart, Dan, 1955-57; AAR Archives.
appears to have been cemented more through its faculty than through its students, although it produced five Rome Prize winners in architecture from 1947-1966.\(^{43}\) Two of its professors of architecture would serve as architects in residence during this period: one, Francis Comstock, went twice, in 1957 and 1960.\(^{44}\) His colleague Jean Labatut came a total of four times: in 1952-53, 1959, 1964, and 1968—more Academy residencies than any other senior architect in its history. Because Labatut’s primary reputation and influence on American architecture were exercised through his Princeton professorship, whose program during these years was largely defined by his presence, his relationship to the Academy is most easily discussed within the context of this school.

Labatut (1899-1986), a graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts and winner of a second-place medal in the Institut de France’s Prix de Rome competition of 1926, served as director of Princeton’s architecture program from 1928-1967. The school is generally remembered as an important exception to many of the educational trends marking postwar architecture. A 1949 letter to Labatut from architect Antonin Raymond, a Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced architect who worked extensively in Japan, describes his perception of Princeton’s distinctiveness:

> It was not work but a privilege and a pleasure to judge the MFA theses. I want to congratulate you on the result of your guidance and instruction. I believe that this was about the best work I have seen at any institution and what struck me most was the high intellectual and cultural level of the candidates. Your delving into the past to rejuvenate the age long principles of good design is particularly important, and distinguishes your school from perhaps all others.\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) I include in this number Walker O. Cain, the Princeton graduate and McKim, Mead and White employee who won the Rome Prize in 1940 and whose residency was deferred until 1948, although this sets him apart from the revised postwar selection process. It is also fair to note that the Princeton program has long been quite small, so its five Rome Prizes constitute a respectable record.

\(^{44}\) Unfortunately, very little information is available about Francis Adams Comstock or his relationship with the Academy. His only published work is a book entitled *A Gothic Vision: F.L. Griggs and His Work* (Boston and Oxford: Boston Public Library and Ashmolean Museum, 1966), of which 600 copies were printed. Its subject, F.L. Griggs (1876-1938) was a British architect and etcher of medieval-revival architecture and townscapes.

\(^{45}\) Letter, Antonin Raymond to Jean Labatut, 4 February 1949, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 9 Folder 7, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter “RBSC, Princeton”).
The unusual attitude towards history which so struck Raymond is what largely defines Princeton’s postwar architectural reputation. This university’s program has entered the literature through discussions of Robert Venturi, who received his M.F.A. there in 1950. It was also the subject of a January 1977 exhibition entitled “Princeton’s Beaux-Arts and its New Academicism: An Exhibition of Original Drawings over Fifty Years.” Held by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, it followed on the heels of the 1975 MoMA exhibition *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts*, and “recast the school’s contemporary legacy from the perspective of an ongoing Beaux-Arts pedagogy.” In contrast to the wholesale rejection of architectural history played out most dramatically at Harvard, Princeton’s approach to the subject has received special emphasis.

Princeton’s architecture program did possess some unique and distinguishing characteristics during this period. Its conferral of a Master of Fine Arts rather than an Architecture degree to its design graduates was unusual, if not unique. But even more importantly, its architecture program was a department within the College of Humanities, not, as was more typical, either an independent professional school, like the GSD, or part of a college of art or engineering. Raymond’s observation about the students’ “high intellectual and cultural level” can be read in many ways: it may be a reflection of a privileged student body that had benefited from travel and elite preparatory education, as at other Ivy League schools. But Raymond’s compliment is probably a reflection of the unusual expectation that Princeton architecture students demonstrate scholarly as well as creative ability. The program’s close relationship with the humanities, especially fields like art history, meant that Princeton students had a much more thorough education in art and architectural history than was typical during the postwar period. Art history faculty often participated closely in students’ design thesis work, which could include considerable research and writing. In 1949, this scholarly

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48 Much of this attention coincides with the presence and rise to prominence of Michael Graves, who began teaching at Princeton in 1962 and has arguably left a stamp on the school as indelible as that of Labatut.
architectural ethos became more firmly established when Labatut founded Princeton’s Ph.D. program in architecture, the first in the U.S.

However, it is important to distinguish this emphasis on historical competence from a historicist approach to architectural design, which would have been considered highly retrograde. Princeton did maintain a Beaux-Arts-derived pedagogical structure, in which design is taught through typological problems assigned to individual students and critiqued by a jury of architects. But this was true of most other schools as well, and is the same system that largely endures to the present. The shift to modernism was primarily one of style and design project programming, rather than of educational structure. Undoubtedly, Princeton students were expected to know more history than most of their peers at other schools, and to understand it in more intellectually sophisticated terms. But they were not taught to design in historical styles, but in thoroughly modern idioms. This is evident in Robert Venturi’s master’s thesis project of 1950, in which his design for a private school chapel clearly employs a fully contemporary language of architectural abstraction and the rusticity typical of Le Corbusier’s current work (fig. 2.1).49

Regretfully, Labatut’s reputation has been somewhat distorted by prevailing assumptions about the program he led. He was certainly the central figure at Princeton during his years of leadership, and the program’s emphasis on teaching history to architects reflected his own beliefs. Primarily an educator who did not produce a large corpus of built works, his reputation has depended most heavily upon accounts of his teaching philosophy.50 But Labatut’s Beaux-Arts credentials and emphasis on history were hardly his entire architectural identity: he was closely

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50 Labatut’s most famous project after coming to the U.S. in 1928 was the “Fountain Spectacles” at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, an extravaganza of water, light, and music. This memorable fountain motivated Eero Saarinen to invite Labatut to design the extensive decorative water works for his General Motors Technical Center, an offer he declined. He was also invited by Edward Durrell Stone to consult on the fountain design for the U.S. Pavilion for the Brussels Exposition of 1958. See letter, Eero Saarinen to Jean Labatut, 31 October 1950, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 9, Folder 10, and letter, Edward D. Stone to Jean Labatut, 2 May 1957, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 10 Folder 1, Manuscripts Division, RBSC, Princeton.
acquainted with such figures as Le Corbusier, Sigfried Giedion, Louis Kahn, and Buckminster Fuller.\(^5^1\) Perhaps the most concrete proof of Labatut’s modernist credentials is the invitation by Le Corbusier, whom he had known since 1920, to succeed him as head of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (C.I.A.M.) in 1938, an offer Labatut declined.\(^5^2\) Had he accepted, this would have placed him at the highest leadership position in modern architecture’s single most influential international organization, one that would define orthodox modern architectural and urbanism for decades.

Labatut’s four residencies at the American Academy in Rome were not the earliest way in which he supported European study for U.S. architecture students. Every summer between 1927-1939, and for summers from 1945-1947, Labatut taught architecture at the American School of Fine Arts at Fontainebleau, just outside Paris.\(^5^3\) (fig. 2.2) Labatut described the purpose of such a program in 1943 as follows:

To live and work in such a frame, in such an environment as Fontainebleau, which was recreated so many times in the past, can be most stimulating under the following conditions: First, to be convinced of the fact that to ignore the past is bad, but to know too little about the past is worse; second, to be convinced that it is wise to step back before taking a better leap into the future, if one does not forget to jump after having stepped back. The past should be taken as a stimulant, not as a refuge, as an example of what not to do in another

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\(^5^1\) In a 1943 letter to Labatut, Giedion writes warmly: “J’étais vraiment enchanté du bon accueil chaleureux à Princeton. J’ai regretté seulement de ne pas avoir suivi le conseil de Corbusier de vous visiter plus tôt.” (“I was truly charmed by your warm welcome at Princeton. I only regret not having followed Corbusier’s advice to visit you sooner.”) Letter, Sigfried Giedion to Jean Labatut, 12 November 1943, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 5, Folder 5, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library [hereafter “RSBC, Princeton”].


\(^5^3\) See the preserved letter regarding his passport renewal (Jean Labatut to State Department, 3 July 1946, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 11, Folder 1, Manuscripts Division, RBSC, Princeton). Additional correspondence places Labatut there in the summer of 1947, but his archive does not make explicit exactly how long he continued to teach there.
Such a philosophy is just as easily applicable to Rome as it is to Fontainebleau. With a total of four residencies, three of which occurred during the period under study, Labatut provided the most persistent senior architectural presence at the postwar Academy. Despite this, his extensive personal archive at Princeton maintains only a few direct traces of Labatut’s time in Rome and his relationship with the Academy. Among these are a few sign-up sheets from 1968 for what he called his “à pied d’œuvre” lectures, in which he would lead a group to a set of sites chosen for their relevance to a specific theme. His conceptually conceived field trips show a well-considered use of Rome as a teaching tool to illuminate design problems defined in abstract terms. Two sets of lecture notes, which present the Piazza Navona as an exemplar of a richly and purposefully choreographed urban and architectural design, give a direct sense of how he framed the significance of figures like Bernini for an audience of young modern architects.

Labatut certainly enjoyed a close and comfortable relationship with the Academy, and he may have been a reliably willing “stand-by” for it to call upon when no other senior architect was available to serve in residence. He was apparently reliably willing to return to Europe, and had a

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54 Letter, Jean Labatut to Yvonne L. du Payron, Treasurer, Fontainebleau Alumni Association, 24 August, 1943, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 3, Folder 10, Manuscripts Division, RBSC, Princeton.
55 In 1976, Labatut was awarded the ASCA/AIA Award for Teaching Excellence, which, as he was informed in the letter announcing this honor, is the pedagogical pendant to the A.I.A. Gold Medal. See letter, ASCA Executive Director David Clarke to Jean Labatut, 22 April 1976, Jean Labatut Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Manuscripts Division, RBSC, Princeton.
56 The Labatut Papers include only a small amount of direct correspondence with the Academy or Academy-related individuals, and only a handful of photographs that seem to have been taken during his residencies.
57 These sites include the Aldobrandini and Falconieri Gardens, Villas at Caprarola, Lante and Bomarzo, D’Este, Fosse Ardeatina and F.A.O. Building; “The size of monumentality” visit to St. Peter’s (models by Sangallo and Michelangelo, and the lantern), the new audience hall, Piazza del Campidoglio, and the Tempietto; and a “sequence of events” tour from the first century necropolis, crypt, dome, and Bernini’s “landscape composition” from piazza, portico, Scala Regia, Aula Ducale, and Sistine Chapel.
58 The most direct evidence for Labatut’s thoughts on Rome’s relevance to modern architecture is found in two sets of handwritten lecture notes, one of which is identified as a presentation delivered on 30 May 1959 to the Centre d’Études St. Louis de France in Rome (“Bernini,” n.d., Jean Labatut Papers, Box 14, Folder 3; and “Navona,” Jean Labatut Papers, Box 14, Folder 7; Manuscripts Division, RBSC, Princeton). While written in French and not likely to have been intended for an Academy audience (although he does thank the Academy at the beginning), the discussion entitled “Message du Bernin aux architectes ‘modernes’” speaks directly to the problem of Rome’s relevance to contemporary architectural issues. Twenty years later, Labatut published the core arguments discussed in these lecture notes in his essay “History of Architectural Education Through People,” Journal of Architectural Education 33, no. 2 (November 1979): 22-24.
reputation as a warm and personable figure who was probably quite popular with the Fellows. Whatever the specific dynamics of the relationship, Labatut’s belief in reconciling history and modern architecture was a propitious and welcome architectural philosophy at the postwar Academy, and cemented Princeton’s close connection to Rome.  

Through these close relationships with Harvard, Yale, MIT and Princeton, the Academy remained part of the same sort of socially exclusive educational world that had supported it since the 1890s. At the turn of the twentieth century, the establishment of university-based architecture programs was an ongoing project, with the most prestigious generally adhering most closely to the theories and methodologies of the Parisian Beaux-Arts model. With the decline of this ideology in the 1930s-40s, power relations within this institutional fraternity shifted, and elite programs in architecture came to be defined in starkly different aesthetic and methodological terms. But from a social and economic standpoint, the institutional environments that nurtured them remained essentially the same. Both before and after the war, the Academy’s primary architectural interest was in attracting students from whichever design programs were perceived as the country’s best. However uncomfortable certain trustees and jurors of the late 1940s and early 1950s might have been with the influence of Gropius and Mies on their discipline, they were savvy enough to know that their institution’s reputation could only benefit from association with students from Harvard, Yale, MIT and Princeton. In such schools, students would be shaped by both the modern

59 This close relationship would continue into the 1970s and 80s through Michael Graves, who combined prominent leadership at Princeton with later involvement with the Academy as a Resident (1979) and Trustee (1981-93). It is worth noting, however, that a Princeton association was hardly a guarantee of a Rome Prize: 1950 Princeton graduate Robert Venturi only received his after three application attempts, despite his impressive record, glowing recommendations from famous figures, and extremely well-written statements of purpose.

60 For example, several schools supported the young Academy by encouraging or even requiring the winners of certain traveling fellowships to reside there for a time. In architecture, these included Rotch Scholars, the University of Pennsylvania Traveling Scholars, Harvard University’s Appleton Scholars, and (most appropriately) Columbia’s McKim Scholarships, among others. See the Centennial Directory, pp. 371-374, and Valentine and Valentine, The Academy, passim.

61 Intriguingly, there is only the most tenuous of connections between the Academy and Mies, through IIT. Two fellows had studied at IIT as undergraduates, one (Stanley Pansky, ’52-53) in engineering before attending the GSD, the other (Charles Stifter, ’61-63) in architecture, prior to a terminal degree from MIT.
movement and traditionally elite institutional affiliations and social practices, and eventually become the producers of a newly palatable, modern image for corporate America.\textsuperscript{62} They were also more likely to enjoy the economic means that permitted extended travel and study in Europe early in their careers. Only one Rome Prize was awarded to one of Mies’ former students from IIT, a school whose engineering emphasis and more working-class student body set it apart more than geographically from the Ivy League.\textsuperscript{63}  

But while students from these schools establish the dominant Rome Prize pattern, it is worth considering the exceptions as well. Two Fellows received their terminal degrees from Cornell University, and one from the Pratt Institute.\textsuperscript{64} But since these two schools are located in the Northeast (Ithaca and Brooklyn, New York, respectively), and Cornell is part of the Ivy League, they are not entirely detached from the worlds of Harvard, Yale, MIT and Princeton.\textsuperscript{65} Only five architecture Fellows out of forty lacked any educational connection to the Academy’s Northeastern power base, with one each from the University of Oklahoma, Cranbrook, the University of Illinois, North Carolina State University, and the University of California, Berkeley.\textsuperscript{66} Cranbrook was prominently associated with Elie Saarinen, and two more of these schools enjoyed an unusual degree of visibility during these years because of a few high-profile individuals: Bruce Goff at the

\textsuperscript{62} Edwin Gilbert’s three Yale-educated protagonists in \textit{Native Stone} illustrate these social and aesthetic dynamics; one, a wealthy Boston Brahmin, moves smoothly into a Miesian practice through independent wealth and family connections. Another, working class, market-savvy, and unburdened by scruples, marries his elite friend’s sister to gain and exploit a similar advantage. The third, disadvantaged by his aesthetic idealism, Jewish-Irish ethnicity, and the burden of supporting an ailing mother alone, faces the most difficult pathway to professional success.  
\textsuperscript{63} Charles Stifter (1961-63) was the only fellow who studied architecture at IIT before earning his master’s at MIT, effectively “filtering” him through the Ivy League afterwards. Stanley Pansky (1952-53) had studied briefly at IIT before graduating from the GSD in 1950. \textsuperscript{64} The Cornell graduates are Jova, ’49-51 and Platner ’55-56. Bernard Steinberg (’61-63) also received his B.Arch. from Cornell in 1955, a program that would see increased prominence with the arrival of Colin Rowe, who taught there briefly from 1957-58 before joining Cornell’s faculty permanently in 1963. Amisano (’51-52) was from Pratt, where Olindo Grossi (FAAR 1934-36) was Dean of Architecture from 1945-69, although he did not provide a letter for Amisano’s application.  
\textsuperscript{65} The fellows from these schools, Jova, Platner and Amisano, were also employed by prominent architects connected to the Academy: Harrison and Abramovitz (Jova and Amisano) and Eero Saarinen (Platner).  
\textsuperscript{66} These five are Gresham, (’54-56, Oklahoma), Jacob (’56-58, Cranbrook), Dirsmit (’58-60, Illinois), Taylor (’60-62, N.C. State), and Steinberg (’61-63, Berkeley).
University of Oklahoma, and both Dean Henry Kamphoefner and Matthew Nowicki at North Carolina State. The Fellows from the three other schools (all respected and well-known programs) will be discussed in greater detail below by way of their project proposals. But the presence of this small group of relatively unconnected applicants educated “down south” or “out west” from the Academy’s New York headquarters may reflect a conscious, possibly token nod to institutional or geographic “diversity.” A handwritten comment on Wayne Taylor’s application from North Carolina State notes that “he is the first member of his family to attend college.” Other comments suggest that influence could extend the other direction, as in the case of one Fellow whose records show that he was “known personally to Dean Pietro Belluschi of MIT, a member of the Arch. Jury, who spoke for him.” The fact that Robert Venturi had to apply three times to obtain a Rome Prize, despite his Princeton degree, letters from such figures as Louis Kahn, Eero Saarinen, and Jean Labatut, and an eloquent statement of purpose demonstrating unusually well-developed and informed interests in Italian architecture is proof that other forces were at work. It was still an undeniably clubby world at the Academy, and connections did matter. But there appears to have been at least an occasional, conscious attempt to open the door to Rome a bit wider.

Project Proposals I: Modern Architecture and a New Grand Tour

The themes found in Rome Prize project proposals follow a pattern which echoes that of the Academy’s relationships to architecture schools. A small set of “mainstream” topics and issues

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67 Gresham had a letter of support from Goff, and Taylor one from Kamphoefner. Matthew Nowicki wrote a letter for Robert Golder, the only fellow from Penn, who had done undergraduate work at N.C. State. See their respective application documents in the Fellows Files; AAR Archives.
69 This was Dan R. Stewart (’55-57), as recorded in a handwritten note on his application form. Stewart was an MIT graduate of ’55, and most likely knew Belluschi through the school.
dominate, punctuated by a few, often very interesting, exceptions. Both the mainstream and the exceptional topics demonstrate how Rome prize fellowships were made relevant to mid-century architectural formation, and, more broadly, how Rome’s significance was interwoven with contemporary aesthetics, ideologies, and practices. Applicants for postwar fellowships were asked to submit examples of their past work, letters of recommendation, and written statements explaining how they intended to make use of the Rome Prize.\textsuperscript{70} Finalists were then invited to New York for personal interviews with the selection committee, held at the offices of McKim, Mead and White until 1958.\textsuperscript{71} While such a location certainly evoked the Academy’s Beaux-Arts past, the request for a statement of purpose from Rome Prize applicants marks a fundamental philosophical shift in the institution’s relationship with architecture as a discipline.

As discussed in the previous chapter, published statements by J.K. Smith and Edgar Williams (in 1948 and 1952, respectively) sought to define the Academy’s architectural relevance in terms that avoided alienating its past participants and current supporters, while also promoting the Rome Prize in terms that might appeal to young architects with new priorities.\textsuperscript{72} The request that postwar applicants explain their reasons for seeking an Academy fellowship obliged aspirants to meditate upon and justify Rome’s potential contribution to contemporary architectural practice. To a great extent, this delegated the problem of defining Rome’s significance to the next generation, leaving the Academy to simply approve those definitions and justifications it found acceptable rather than formulate them \textit{ex novo}.

These written statements of purpose bear direct witness to an intellectual and creative struggle by young architects (usually in their twenties) to articulate precisely why they wanted to

\textsuperscript{70} Most of the Fellows Files held by the Academy’s archives include the original application forms, which specify the information required. While a small space was made available for these statements on the form itself, most were typed on separate pages.

\textsuperscript{71} This practice seems to have endured through the end of the presidency of J.K. Smith (President, American Academy in Rome, 1938-1958), a partner in the firm.

spend a year at the Academy. Many are highly vague and read as somewhat naïve, and they range in length from the verbose and meandering to the startlingly brief. A few show great imagination and mature, even profound insight. In most cases, there is little evidence of the proposed project actually being carried out, and a few read as little more than thinly veiled pretexts for a leisurely, subsidized Roman Holiday. Nevertheless, each one, whatever its strengths and weaknesses as a work of architectural writing, a sincere articulation of beliefs, or a prediction of how time will actually be spent at the Academy, valuably documents a young architect’s best effort to explain why going to Rome was a meaningful act in his or her professional development. Collectively, the Fellows’ statements map out a new reading of this city being constructed by a generation of young architects, reflecting not only their individual efforts but also effects of the professors, authors, and employers—i.e., the broader discipline—that helped shape and indoctrinate them. The proposals also constitute the chosen building blocks out of which the new Academy would construct its postwar architectural identity: in bestowing its fellowships, the Academy was selecting its own architectural present and future, both highly contingent upon the projects and identities of the Rome Prize winners themselves (fig. 1.12).

Affiliation with the most prestigious Ivy League design schools, glowing letters from famous architects, and award-winning, published, strikingly rendered designs would have all helped successful applicants. But the written project proposals certainly provided the most direct insight into an individual’s preliminary vision of Rome, and gave the jury the opportunity to judge the merits of each applicant’s intended use of the fellowship. Yet, in at least a few cases, it seems the award was likely given in spite of, rather because of, what is written. One example is the earliest

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73 The Statements of Purpose for each Rome Prize Fellow are held with their application documents, filed by name in the Fellows Files; AAR Archives. Henceforth, citations from these statements will simply be identified in the text by each fellow’s name and fellowship years.
74 The Academy Archives have not retained the portfolios of design work that were sent along with applications. The rejection letters retained among the files of fellows who applied more than once mention that the portfolios are being returned, so this may have been standard policy for all applicants.
statement of purpose preserved in the archives, which is also the one that appears least calculated to flatter the jury:

Dear Sirs:

In reply to your telegram of 25 April requesting a statement as to why I am interested in securing a Rome Fellowship, I submit the following.

I live in a room with little heat, [and] share a bath and the small amount of hot water with the other tenants in the building. I can afford better quarters but there aren’t any – and nobody is building any. I eat all my meals in restaurants and nowadays [sic] prices make it impossible to save much money. I have a good job and a fair salary but just living in a large city costs me about as much as I earn – and I have never been to Europe.

When building costs permit small building and living costs permit the luxury of a private practice I want to establish my own office. Till that time arrives I am preparing myself with experience, education, and travel.

A Rome Fellowship will permit me to travel in Europe, possibly work in offices, live in a foreign country so the contemporary work of that country will have meaning for me. I want to experience the space concepts of the Classic, Renaissance and Baroque planners. I do not know what program of study is required of a Rome Fellowship recipient, but I want to use Rome as a base for travel, work, and study in all parts of Europe.

Sincerely yours,

Charles D. Wiley

Wiley wrote this statement from Chicago, where he had been employed by the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) since 1945. He had graduated from the GSD in 1941 and worked for Eero Saarinen from 1944-45. His letters of recommendation were written by Saarinen, Gropius, and Hugh Stubbins. Wiley had also received wider recognition through two published competition designs, both featuring postwar housing prototypes that used plywood-panel modular construction and a spare, lean modernist aesthetic (fig. 2.3). In the brave new world of postwar American architecture, his credentials and record were first-rate. But to anyone who has ever written or

reviewed similar essays, Wiley’s statement of purpose hardly appears worthy of a prestigious fellowship.

Since the date of the letter, April 25, is identical to the date of the telegram Wiley received from the Academy, he likely did not agonize laboriously over either its contents or its composition. It is this palpable spontaneity that makes Wiley’s statement of purpose by far one of the most memorable in the archives. Such blunt honesty: postwar Chicago is an expensive and uncomfortable place to live, and he is stuck in professional limbo until wartime economic constraints end. He figures that going to Rome might plausibly fall under his interim search for “experience, education, and travel.” The only thing more surprising than Wiley’s directness about his motives is the response he received from the Academy’s Executive Secretary, Mary T. Williams, about six weeks later: “We are delighted to know that you accept the Prix de Rome Fellowship in Architecture for the coming year….Your reasons for wanting a Fellowship were acceptable to the jury. All we say now is, here is your opportunity, go to it!”

One gets the distinct sense that Rome is no more intrinsically desirable a destination for Wiley than London, Paris, or Athens—for that matter, any place in Europe equipped with a train station and a free apartment (assuming abundant heat and hot water). He does not present himself as someone who has spent years dreaming of tracing the pathway of the column of light from the Pantheon’s oculus across its coffered dome, gazing reverentially at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or wandering sentimentally through the vicoli of Trastevere. His first stated goal is a sort of vaguely conceived European cultural experience, one designed to gain him a more authoritative understanding of the whole continent’s “contemporary” architecture. Wiley’s priorities echo the way one history of modern architecture in the United Kingdom describes young British architects’ postwar travel patterns:

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, architects had flocked to continental Europe to see examples of important interwar modern architecture in France, Italy, and Germany. Sweden had also joined the itinerary...because there was a perceived linkage between Scandinavian architecture and social democracy. By the 1950s, the itinerary had expanded further. The masterpieces of the ancient and medieval worlds and the perennial recommendations gleaned from Bannister Fletcher remained on the list, but new stops on the pilgrimage came from reading 'Casabella and the Danish magazines' and 'the Architectural Review and Architectural Design (once Theo Crosby woke it up)'. 'Anything by Corb' always merited a visit. By 1960, this version of the modern architectural ‘Grand Tour’ had its list of sites. These included:

- France for Le Corbusier’s buildings in Paris, Nantes and Marseilles
- Scandinavia for Alvar Aalto’s sanatorium at Paimio and church at Imatra...
- Italy for works by Pier Luigi Nervi, BBPR (Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti and Rogers), Giuseppe Terragni and Gio Ponti....
- Switzerland...The Netherlands...and West Berlin...79

While Italy and the “masterpieces” of the historical canon are mentioned in passing, greater interest and enthusiasm is reserved for “important interwar architecture” by Italian designers whose careers were either limited to (in the case of Terragni) or spanned the Fascist and post-war eras. All in all, Italy and its historical patrimony were not the focus for young Britons embarking on their own architectural tours of the continent.80

The one statement that speaks directly to some sort of specifically “Roman” purpose is Wiley’s desire “to experience the space concepts of the Classic, Renaissance, and Baroque planners.” This sentence feels rather tacked-on and formulaic, as though only as he neared the bottom of his typed page did he hit upon a minimally convincing pretext for wanting the Rome (versus some other city’s) Prize. But even so, “Classic, Renaissance, and Baroque planners” could also be “experienced” in varying degrees in many other European cities. Wiley’s Academy statement leaves the specific teleological necessity of Rome itself largely undefined, although he does, in his offhand manner,

80 The contrasting Rome experiences of American Robert Venturi and his later partner, South Africa and London-educated architect Denise Scott Brown, demonstrate illustrative instances of these different attitudes towards Italy; see note 147 below.
introduce the single most frequently recurring theme found in all the Fellows’ Academy proposals: an open assertion of the need for a direct, haptic and culturally grounded experience of European life, sites and architectural exemplars. This issue recurs more frequently than any other, present in some way in twenty-four out of the thirty-eight preserved statements. While it might seem to be a natural subject to discuss in an application for international travel and residency, it is curious that so many applicants felt the need to explain and assert—to an organization founded specifically to sponsor residence in a foreign country, no less—the value and importance of such an experience.

The importance of travel, in particular travel to Italy, has been an enduring motif in architectural training at least since Brunelleschi and Alberti began exploring Rome’s ruins in the early Quattrocento. The purpose of these pilgrimages, related closely but distinctly to the aristocratic Grand Tour that became formalized by the eighteenth century, depended upon an interest in classicism as an architectural language. Travel to Rome and other reified sites certainly provided other benefits, in particular an aura of worldly sophistication that helped legitimize an architect’s claim to cultural and professional authority. But its specifically architectural rationale derived from the belief that direct access to the monuments of antiquity and approved antique-revival buildings conveyed a superior and useful form of design knowledge, one distinct from that available in existing books and drawings. Ironically, the travels of each new generation of architects frequently gave rise to new writings and drawings meant as correctives to those already available, perpetuating the cycle.

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81 I detect the presence of this theme in some way in the statements by Wiley, Byrd, Lamantia, Daltas, Jova, Leavitt, Pansky, Peterson, Gresham, Venturi, Platner, Brickbauer, Jarrett, Dirsmit, Stonehill, Musko, Graves, Taylor, Zarina, Thorbeck, Thompson, Liebman, Perry, and Pederson.

82 For Alberti’s his innovative marriage of literary and artistic antiquarianism, see especially Anthony Grafton, Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

83 Among the vast literature on the Grand Tour, works that discuss its specific relation to architecture within a specifically British context include David Watkin’s “Sir John Soane’s Grand Tour: Its Impact on His Architecture and His Collections,” and Frank Salmon’s “The Impact of the Archaeology of Rome on British Architects and their Work, c. 1750-1840,” both in Clare Hornsby, ed., The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond (London: The British School at Rome, 2000).
The demise of literal classicism by the 1940s created an aesthetic schism between the Italy of tradition and American architects.\(^{84}\) It paralleled the fall of Paris as the world’s art capital, famously mourned by Harold Rosenberg in 1940, which left a cultural vacuum into which New York would step during and after the war.\(^{85}\) Jackson Pollock, who would become one of the most prominent emblems of American leadership in postwar avant-garde art, had dismissed the necessity of international travel for his own work in 1944: “Never been to Europe… I don’t see why the problems of modern painting can’t be solved here as elsewhere.”\(^{86}\) The prevalence of so many explicit justifications for Italian travel and residency by the postwar Rome Prize applicants suggests they were grappling with their own doubts about its relevance, understandably so within the active public promotion of a newly U.S.-centered cultural realm.

Those who argued for the continuing relevance of Rome and Italy to a young American architect’s education tended to do so in one of two ways. Henri Jova (’49-’51) wrote that “A year in Rome any time, and under any circumstances, would be an inspiring and sobering experience for anyone creative,” a theme further expounded by Astra Zarina (’60-’63): “For several centuries Italy, its culture, its atmosphere has served as a ‘finishing school’ for creative and inquiring minds, providing them a lifelong source of inspiration.”\(^{87}\) By proclaiming Italy to be a wellspring, nourishing decades of future creativity, they echo some of the earliest writings promoting the Academy in the

\(^{84}\) Exceptions to this overall characterization would of course persist: an important example for the postwar Academy is the design of the Anzio Cemetery in Italy, carried out by trustee Eric Gugler’s firm of Gugler, Kimball and Husted of New York and landscape architect Ralph Griswold (FAAR 1923) while visiting the Academy in the 1950s.


\(^{87}\) These citations and all those that follow are taken from the essays preserved with the application documents preserved in each fellow’s respective collection in the Fellows Files, AAR Archives. For simplicity, given the repeated reference to these documents in the following sections, such citations will be referenced simply through the fellow’s name and fellowship years.
1890s, lacking only their direct evocations of classical antiquity.88 James Lamantia (‘48-‘49) was careful to both embed his argument in artistic tradition, and to distinguish current motives from those of past eras:

Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, the theorist of neo-classic landscape and Corot’s master, wrote “Italy! Italy! This is the goal of all artists who begin to sense the beauties of their art, and who are possessed by the enthusiasm of the talented.” But the romantic attractions and the dogmatic stratagems of an already classically [sic] minded Europe in 1800 are not the same catylists [sic] for us today – we stand in a different light.

…If the generation of the Beaux Arts saw Italy with a sense of idolatry, our own generation must be given the opportunity to see her with whatever attitude it may achieve…

Lamantia’s describes the country’s positive inspiration in natural terms, as “a country whose atmospheres and lights are passionately stimulating.”89 Others, such as Ronald Dirsmith (‘58-60) specify Italy’s virtues in more detail, arguing that “first-hand experiences of historic centers, their buildings, and their art cannot fail to stimulate personal growth in understanding and appreciation.” Such formulations define Italy as a place that simply, almost naturally, nurtures creativity of any sort.

The second type of argument asserts that travel to Italy was necessary for any American architect’s own cultural development:

I personally feel that Europe, and Rome in particular, being the foundation of our western civilization and a repository for all art that has accumulated throughout its history as well as being still a living and producing entity in the arts, has many lessons to teach the inquiring mind (Warren Peterson, ‘53-‘55).

David Leavitt (‘49-51) describes his “desire to travel and to visit the great monuments in Italy as well as Europe” as “natural.” Leavitt also mentions that he had served in the Pacific during World War II, implying that without travel to Europe, his international experience was still incomplete, a demonstration of a strong and quite typical occidentalist cultural bias. James Gresham (‘54-56) acquired his taste for architectural travel from trips to Mexico, but argues that Europe is a more

89 Lamantia also wrote about the importance of the contemporary Italian architectural scene, one of the few fellows to do so, which will be discussed below.
relevant destination: “I do not feel that the culture of Mexico can possibly affect me so vitally as that of Europe. It is European aesthetics and European ideas that provide the broad basis for American art and American thought.” Such statements demonstrate the widespread perception that the U.S. and Europe shared an essential cultural identity, although it is not defined by these Fellows in terms of a specific architectural tradition.

While such formulations might today read as narrowly Eurocentric, they reflect a disciplinary hierarchy of cultural knowledge, one that still privileged Rome over Oaxaca or Singapore. Michael Graves (’60-’62) links the issue of cultural preparation directly to that of professional success: “Architects, in order to explore the problems of contemporary architecture, must necessarily have a specific cultural background which should qualify them for an appreciation of the valid works of the past.” Without explicitly defining the nature of this preparation or what exactly makes past works “valid,” he clearly believes Rome provides both. Warren Platner (’55-’56) describes the architect’s “need and…obligation to understand his heritage in tradition,” making the link direct and personal, almost genetic. Several other essays, like that of Spero Daltas (’49-’52), also define study in Rome, Italy, or Europe in general as “a very necessary phase of an architectural career.” A number state directly that they are pursuing the opportunity to reside in Rome because of an expected professional benefit: “Seeing the buildings and towns of the past and present [in Europe] is of great value in the development of an architect” (Stanley Pansky, ’52-’53). James Jarrett (’57-’59) writes that a worldly, well-traveled identity is necessary for “my own completeness as an individual and my value as an architect.” Theodore Liebman (’64-’66) specifically contrasts the importance of a saturation within, rather than a passing, tourist-like exposure to, life in Italy, to provide a “kind of living-experience…as opposed to a visual travel-experience” so that his future work “will be executed with
a fuller sense of responsibility for the many ways that buildings and spaces relate to and influence the life of people.”

Liebman’s statement joins an argument for Italy’s professional necessity with another crucial assertion: that it should be experienced firsthand. Even if one accepts the argument that Italy is either creatively inspiring or culturally central to the (Euro-)American architect, it does not automatically follow that its particular, often well-documented lessons can only be learned through direct physical contact. Several Fellows addressed this by mentioning the inadequacy or incompleteness of any familiarity that is mediated by books or photographs: “To experience at first-hand the grandeur of the Baths of Caracalla, the elegance of the Villa Lante, or the splendor of St. Peter’s should transform the second-hand glimpse gleaned from lectures and library into exciting realities” (Dirsmith). Charles O. Perry (’64-’66) wrote, “Architecture is not written, it is built; not a picture, an environment. I want to draw from the knowledge of Europe, and to do so I must be there, see it, smell it, hear it, live it.” Michael Graves pointed out that, given architecture’s intrinsic immobility, travel is necessary for such a direct, sensory form of knowledge:

It is possible to gather from all over the Western world the paintings of Titian or Breughel and so reveal their special quality in single great exhibitions; it is possible to perform the works of Bach or Mozart in concerts devoted to them, but it is a physical impossibility to transport buildings as one does paintings. Therefore, to experience the dome of the Cathedral of Florence by Brunelleschi or the apse and dome of St. Peter’s by Michelangelo, one must be within the space itself…. Space value in architecture is affected first and foremost by actual dimensions; but it is affected also by many other considerations. It is affected by lighting and the position of shadows. It is affected by color. It is affected by our own expectancy, by the space we have immediately left.

Such attempts to contrast the hoped-for experience of Italy from more conventional, touristic modes of absorption can be analyzed using differentiations distinguished by sociologists of tourism in other contexts. The foundational study of tourism as constitutive of modern identity is Dean MacCannell’s The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, Second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), first published in 1976. Subsequent studies use and modify MacCannell’s model in ways directly relevant to the architect’s specific type of travel experience. These include John Urry’s discussions of the ‘romantic gaze’ preferred by travelers of cultural and intellectual pretensions, versus the “collective gaze” of the bourgeois tourist. The traveling architect’s specific mode of viewing Italian sites and cities would arguably bridge his categories of the “reverential” and the “anthropological” gaze, as well as inject a specifically artistic component which Urry does not consider. See Urry’s The Tourist Gaze (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), especially chapter 5, “Cultural changes and the Restructuring of Tourism,” and chapter 8, “Globalizing the Gaze.”
Dale Byrd (‘49–’51) further contrasts the fleeting sort of passing exposure acquired by the tourist with a deeper, more substantive knowledge that requires residency at some sort of home base, “to absorb or think about the things I had seen and learned.” Similarly, Robert Venturi (‘54–’56) writes that “[the architect’s] knowledge of his tradition of which his work will inevitably form a part, must be empirical.” Venturi, who had visited Rome before his Academy fellowship, tells the jury of his wish “to become familiar with” the things he’s already seen and admired: “Rome’s…easy monumentality, its pedestrian scale, its planning which stimulates a sense of community, are all uncommon elements in the 19th and 20th century city known to an American architect.” His aim is to “know” Rome in a way analogous to his knowledge of his home city of Philadelphia, in a way distinct from and superior to the tourist. Liebman contrasts the “kind of living-experience, made possible through the Rome Prize Fellowship” with a merely “visual travel-experience,” arguing that the former “is essential, I believe, to insuring that my approach to future architectural and urban design problems will be executed with a fuller sense of responsibility for the many ways that buildings and spaces relate to and influence the lives of people.”

Yet despite such assertions, it is far from obvious that travel was in fact necessary, or even relevant, to the formation of a modern architect at mid-century. It is certainly true that the movement had its own set of iconic precedents and pilgrimage-worthy sites, many of which were located in Europe. But not only had war-inflicted damage and the new political boundaries of the Cold War put several (e.g. the Dessau Bauhaus, Mies’ Tugendhat House) beyond reach, but a

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92 Although an increasing body of literature looks at the relationship between architecture and tourism, few works explicitly analyze the phenomenon of architects as a special subclass of travelers. One exception is Joan Ockman’s essay “Bestride the World Like a Colossus: The Architect as Tourist,” in *Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular* (New York: Prestel, 2005), p. 161.
The number of the most revered and influential icons of the modern movement were ephemeral structures constructed for temporary exhibitions. Bruno Taut’s Glass Pavilion and Gropius’ model factory (both for the Werkbund Exhibition of 1914), Le Corbusier’s Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau of 1925, Mies’ Barcelona Pavilion of 1929, and Aalto’s Finnish Pavilion for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, to name only a few, are all highly influential structures that were known most broadly and enduringly through photography.93

This points to an even more fundamental issue, namely that the ways in which Modern Architecture was conceived and disseminated worked against the very necessity of architectural travel. The movement had gained most of its U.S. converts by textual and graphic means. It was through publications, especially the 1927 English translation of Le Corbusier’s seminal treatise Vers une architecture and Johnson and Hitchcock’s 1932 The International Style: Architecture Since 1922, that the new aesthetic found a North American following. The latter of course was associated with a tangible event, the 1932 “Modern Architecture: International Exhibition” at MoMA, which traveled to fourteen American cities afterwards and was attended by thousands.94 But the exhibition was itself a highly mediated presentation of architectural subjects that relied primarily on photographs (supplemented by nine small models) to acquaint viewers and readers with the world of forward-looking design.95 In the course of the 1930s, U.S. architectural journals would reflect the increasing influence of modernist design and graphics, and thereby further influence the discipline’s direction.96

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93 The reconstruction of Mies’ Barcelona Pavilion in 1986 is a testament to the power of images to keep these structures alive and relevant in the architectural imagination. This is not to say that such knowledge did justice to the original models: the rich role of color in a work like Taut’s Glass Pavilion, to use just one example, is completely lost in the black and white photographs.

94 For a list of the exhibition’s travels between March 30 1932-Dec. 15 of 1933, see Appendix 5 of Terence Riley’s The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 222.

95 The nine models displayed at MoMA exhibition included Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, Mies van der Rohe’s Tugendhat House, Gropius’ Bauhaus, Frank Lloyd Wright’s House on the Mesa, and Howe & Lescaze’s Cristie-Forsythe housing project. See the diagram on p. 68 of Riley, The International Style: Exhibition 15.

96 For a thoughtful discussion of the way architectural publications reflected and furthered the shift from Beaux-Arts to modernist conceptual models, see Hyungmin Pai’s The Portfolio and the Diagram: Architecture, Discourse, and Modernity in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002). Of course, the global impact of printed architectural imagery goes back much further, to the illustrated Renaissance treatises of Serlio and Palladio.
Because of the new style’s more abstract aesthetic of planar walls, machined details and (putative) mass-production, it could seemingly be reduced to such two-dimensional terms and simple compositional formulae for purposes of instruction and dissemination. Le Corbusier’s “Five Points” and Johnson and Hitchcock’s three basic, easily applicable “International Style” aesthetic principles were some of the most simple and influential of these reductions. As a style, modern architecture was largely “learned” through reproducible imagery, text, and people, all of which traveled far more easily than buildings. The ascendancy of a movement whose chief exemplars were often ephemeral or inaccessible, whose essential characteristics could be encapsulated in dematerialized forms, and most of whose chief prophets were living in the U.S. by the 1940s, fundamentally altered the traditional rationale and urgency of architectural travel at mid-century.

And yet, despite such changes, travel and the phenomenal experience of architectural precedents occupy an important position in the origins of modern architecture’s conception and development, connecting it much more closely to both Romantic and Academic traditions than might be comfortably acknowledged. Any cursory glance through Vers une architecture makes plain the extent to which Le Corbusier’s first-hand physical experience of the Acropolis, the Pantheon, and the Villa Adriana during his extensive travels of 1907-011 informed his notions of an architecture of both tectonic and spiritual expression. In addition to the oft-discussed correlations between his design language of the 1920s and the Greek Doric order and other aspects of the Classical tradition, his future work would be consistently animated by the importance of the promenade through space, an intrinsically physical experience that his photographs, sketches, and diagrams seek to document but for which they could never be a substitute. One of Le Corbusier’s greatest and most influential

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achievements as an architectural traveler was his immortalization of his voyage as formative “experience”, along with his insistence on framing academically reified sites in abstract terms, selecting, seeing, sketching and photographing these buildings, and in some cases (especially his photographs of Rome) doctoring photographs to reflect his own aesthetic agenda. In so doing, he follows in the footsteps of a Romantic-era figure like Ruskin, who visits Italy specifically to see and be inspired by what the Academic establishment has overlooked and marginalized. In Louis Sullivan’s autobiography, he recounts his own dramatic rejection of the École des Beaux-Arts and direct embrace of Rome as a single, necessary, ecstatic event:

He [Sullivan] must go to Rome, to verify; for the worth of his whole scheme seemed to rest in this delicate balance. It was vital. There must be no doubt. He must, beyond question, be sure of the quality of his eyesight. To Rome he went, quaking but courageous.

The Sistine Chapel! One steady sweep of the eye! It was easy—oh, so easy! So self-evident!...Louis spent three days in Rome—two of them in the Sistine—alone there, almost all the time. Here he communed in the silence with a Super-Man. Here he felt and saw a great Free Spirit. Here he was filled with the awe that stills.

Sullivan describes his two days of direct communion with the creative spirit of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel as a personal discovery of the still-vital inspirational heart of a Nietzschean Superman buried within the dying corpse of academicism. Although Sullivan was in Europe in the 1870s, he wrote about them in the early 1920s, at the same time Le Corbusier was writing the Essai Nouveau essays that would become his manifesto.

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98 A number of the photographs in Towards a New Architecture have been altered (either by the author or under his direction). The interior shot of the Pantheon (on p. 156 of the Dover edition) has erased all offending altars, aediculae, and other decorative encrustations to leave clean marble revetment, and that of S. Maria in Cosmedin on p. 161 is equally and suspiciously lacking in post-medieval traces. This observation was first made to me by James Kalsbeek.

99 This is most clearly evident in Ruskin’s The Stones of Venice (1851-53). Le Corbusier’s early artistic education under L’Eplattenier was heavily Ruskinian, as are his early travel sketches. See Brooks, Le Corbusier’s Formative Years.


101 While Sullivan was fluent in French, it seems unlikely that during his final, troubled years he would have read either Le Corbusier’s book or the Essai Nouveau essays from which it was compiled.
These famous episodes each connect the development of modern architecture with inspiration from direct, phenomenal encounters with canonically historic art and architecture in Europe. Even the origins of the “International Style” exhibition at MoMA lie in travel (fig. 2.4). Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Philip Johnson, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock personally visited almost all of the buildings and the architects that they would later promote, most of which were in Europe. In a July 1931 letter to Barr, Johnson wrote:

It is very amusing to see you writing about [Le Corbusier’s] Stein house with such scorn of the planning. It certainly is rather ghastly, but standing on that upper level of the terrace and looking through the thin roof and lower terrace towards the garden is certainly an experience.

It is somewhat startling to find Johnson stating that one of Le Corbusier’s most praised villas is a failure on paper but a success when visited in person. Johnson, Barr, and Hitchcock arguably looked at European Modernism primarily as connoisseurs, selecting, framing, and commenting upon the movement’s visual and stylistic, as opposed to theoretical or social, significance. But their knowledge of these buildings and designers was not merely visual or diagrammatic, but phenomenal—truly “aesthetic” in its most fully physical, Kantian sense.

Such an enviable experience—touring Europe’s modern architecture in Johnson’s luxury Packard convertible, shipped over from New York with him, no less—was only possible for these very young men at the height of the Great Depression because of Johnson’s enormous personal

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102 In a 1985 interview, Johnson stated that the only building they did not visit was Le Corbusier’s de Mandrot House in Le Pradet, France. In fact, decisions about whose work would be included depended heavily on physical accessibility. He claimed that while they knew Alvar Aalto’s work, it was excluded because Finland “was just awfully far, at that time. We should have gone. We knew we should have gone.” The Philip Johnson Tapes: Interviews with Robert A. M. Stern (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008), pp. 37-39.


104 Of course, as has been discussed by Riley, Johnson was generally more impressed by the work of Mies van der Rohe, while Hitchcock favored Le Corbusier. I confess that as a design student I remained largely unimpressed by images of the Villa Savoye, but was deeply moved by the building when I visited it in person.
wealth.\textsuperscript{105} This rare form of familiarity certainly helped establish them as precociously authoritative experts on the modern movement; in the case of Johnson, it provided his only “real” architectural credentials in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{106} Tourism is always a mark of surplus wealth and leisure time, but theirs would remain an especially unusual and elite form of knowledge about the originary exemplars of European Modernism, in part because their reduction of these buildings to easily digestible images and principles would make replicating such travel seem unnecessary. In addition, along with the ravages of war and the divisions of Cold War Europe, the simple passage of time made it impossible to replicate the experiences of 1930-31. To see the Villa Savoye in 1936 or 1947, for example, was to see a crumbling, decaying remnant of the “pure crystallization” of Le Corbusier’s early career.\textsuperscript{107}

Therefore, there was tension between the International Style as a “disembodied” design model, and the example of direct phenomenal experience set by its chief promoters. While a few of the Academy Fellows, such as Wiley, primarily looked to Europe for its modern architecture, most did not propose using their Rome Prize as a springboard to the Northern and Central European sites visited by Hitchcock and Johnson. Only one Fellow, James Lamantia, wrote about Italy’s own contributions to interwar modern architecture, mentioning Giuseppe Terragni and Pietro Lingeri and the postwar scene being presented through Italian journals like Domus. Robert Myers also asked “Is there a new Italian Renaissance in design…today?”\textsuperscript{108} In general, the relevance of contemporary Italian architectural thought and practice are seldom evoked by Fellows defining Italy as

\textsuperscript{105} In 1930, Philip Johnson was 24 years old, Hitchcock was 27, and Barr was 32; on Johnson’s travels in Europe to research the MoMA exhibition, see Schultze, Johnson, pp. 49-69.

\textsuperscript{106} While Hitchcock and already studied and published on modern architecture, Johnson was essentially a dilettante in 1931, a recent Harvard graduate with a degree in classics and a recently acquired and strictly amateur, albeit intense, interest in the new architecture.

\textsuperscript{107} See Kevin D. Murphy, “The Villa Savoye and the Modernist Historic Monument,” JSAH 61, no. 1 (March 2002): 68-89. I have borrowed the term “crystallization” from William J. R. Curtis’s evocative chapter title on the Villa Savoye from his Architecture Since 1900. The Villa Savoye one visits today is a contemporary cultural artifact whose present state is artificially and expensively maintained by the Fondation Le Corbusier.

\textsuperscript{108} Lamantia has also informed me that he emphasized Italy’s contemporary architectural scene because he thought it was what the jury wanted to hear: “I wanted to see the Baroque.” Interview with author, 2006. That said, the question of Rationalism’s aesthetic and ideological effects on postwar American architecture, in particular the evolution of the New Formalism, will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 3.
professionally, creatively or culturally instrumental for an architect. But the precise lessons to be gleaned from travel and residence there are generally specified through recourse to one of two subjects, each of which merits specific discussion. The first argues that Italy’s repository of historically significant art and architectural monuments either contains specific examples worthy of contemporary study, or collectively constitutes an instructive “tradition.” The second emphasizes the value of its urbanistic and vernacular models as either consistent with or possible correctives to postwar practice. In either case, Italy’s relevance is being framed in terms strongly influenced by postwar architectural ideology and practice.

Project Proposals II: Rome and History at Mid-Century

In William Curtis’ survey of modern architecture, he introduces the American postwar era in terms of a GSD-driven shift in attitude towards history: “At Harvard…an era of Beaux-Arts-inspired instruction came to an end. The past, once the source of all wisdom, came to be regarded with suspicion.” Given the GSD’s unequalled influence on the discipline and Gropius’ famously anti-historical stance, a hostile attitude towards the subject is often generalized for this period as a whole. But many of the project proposals written by the Academy’s architecture Fellows frame Rome’s relevance in explicitly historical terms, often through references to specific structures, sites, and periods or styles. Applicants may have used history merely as a pretext, trusting that, whatever

\[109\] An exception is the statements by two fellows (Stanley Pansky and Wayne Taylor) with a primary interest in the engineers Pier Luigi Nervi, Guido Oberti, and Guido Fiorini. Also, several renewal requests and later reminiscences by fellows (Venturi, Brickbauer, Stewart) mention the impact of working with Italian architects like Ernesto Rogers during his residence. Robert Mittelstadt also worked at the Studio Severino on the master plan for Rome.


the current disciplinary attitude, any Rome-based Academy must still sanction such interests.

Another possibility is that Rome Prize applicants constituted an odd and self-selecting architectural subgroup with an unusual and countervailing set of interests in “Italocentric” subjects like history. In light of Princeton’s continued emphasis on integrating history and modernity, such an interpretation seems especially appropriate for graduates like Robert Venturi, whose statement of purpose documents his early and abiding interest in Mannerist and Baroque architecture.112

Such hypotheses would address the assumption that Rome Prize projects which invoke historical themes were exceptional and anachronistic in relation to the discipline at large. In reality, they closely parallel many of architectural history’s central priorities and functions at mid-century. Despite the famous “elimination” of required architectural history courses from GSD curriculum, to characterize this period as entirely anti-historical is an inaccurate overstatement. In 1936, GSD Dean Joseph Hudnut dramatically ordered the removal of every book published before 1932 from Harvard’s Architecture Library and reduced the required number of history courses from four to three. In 1939 the requirement dropped to one course, and from 1946-1953 history was an elective, not required, field of study.113 However, Hudnut taught history courses throughout his career, and in 1947 asserted the belief that even ten courses in history would not be “too numerous or too arduous.”114 This period saw a radical shift in the sorts of architectural history being written and

112 Both Venturi and David Leavitt (’50-51) wrote statements that show a very mature historical consciousness and deep interests. However, the other two statements from Princeton graduates Tallie Maule (’51-52) and John MacFayden (’53-54) mention history in much briefer, more general terms. It is also noteworthy that Venturi was the last Princeton graduate to receive an architecture fellowship during this period: there are none between 1956-1966, despite Labatut’s repeated residencies at the Academy. Also, as mentioned above (note 59), Venturi was only awarded the fellowship on this third application attempt.


114 See Hudnut, “What a Young Planner Ought to Know,” *J.A.I.A.* 7 (Feb. 1947): 60. Gropius’ precise beliefs on this matter were that history education should come after a student has learned design, so that impressive precedents would not squelch “authentic” expression of present-day aesthetics and cultural needs. See Walter Gropius, “Plan pour un enseignement de l’architecture,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 20 (Feb. 1950): 69-71. A key difference between the two Harvard educators is that Hudnut believed history education should precede design, Gropius the reverse. See Pearlman, *Inventing American Modernism*, pp. 209-218. Hudnut and Gropius’ combined successor, José Luis Sert, would bring Sigfried Giedion to teach on the Harvard faculty in 1953, returning the subject to the program requirements. See also Alofsin,
taught, as well as the ways in which it was deployed in disciplinary discourse and aesthetics. A more precise characterization of this change is that the Beaux-Arts approach to history was replaced by a new, significantly altered model which developed to serve and reflect the interests and priorities of the modern movement.\textsuperscript{115}

Most Beaux-Arts educational programs required architects to gain an intimate visual familiarity with a set of historical exemplars by copying them graphically, acquiring thereby the aesthetic vocabulary used for new designs.\textsuperscript{116} This historical methodology was already being widely questioned in the U.S. by the 1930s, and would continue to be a subject of critique and debate throughout the 1940s and beyond.\textsuperscript{117} In his application statement, Princeton graduate David Leavitt (’50-51) took care to define an approach to historical precedents that would be distinct from that of previous generations:

Italy of course, offers a rich store of examples….All of these are not so much to be copied, but rather to be analyzed as to original problems and effects desired, to ways and means of gaining those effects, to imaginative and satisfying solutions.

Leavitt’s term “effects” defines the exemplary value of Italy’s historic buildings through qualities detached from their style, their patina of age, or any intrinsically authoritative cultural status. Their usefulness lies in how they frame a set of design “problems,” such as “open plazas or closed


\textsuperscript{117} See F. H. Bosworth and Roy Childs Jones, \textit{A Study of Architecture Schools} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), pp. 35-36, where they note how generally unsatisfactory most history education is in architecture schools and mention the few, noteworthy exceptions to this trend. Weatherhead writes in 1941 that “More than in any other division there exists an uncertainty and a general disagreement as to what either the objectives or the approaches to [architectural history] should be” (p. 227). Important fora for this debate were the Octagon and its successor publication, the \textit{J.A.I.A.}, as well as the very young \textit{J.S.A.H.}. 

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courtyards; horizontal and marine vistas...formal as well as informal groups.”

James Jarrett (’57-59) points out that, even in the mid-1950s, teaching design to students still involved invoking specific examples from history: “As a design critic at Yale, I find that I have recourse to the past as much as the present.” Spero Daltas (’49-52) recalls that at MIT, Alvar Aalto “used volumes of measured drawings of architecture in and around Rome,” in particular St. Peter’s and the Vatican, to illustrate different ways to relate structures from different periods.119

The design problem of juxtaposing buildings from different eras and contrasting styles, which is mentioned by several Fellows, is one way in which the relationship between history and modernity is discussed. This was an issue of immediate relevance for U.S. practice at mid-century, as International Style structures were being inserted into a variety of decidedly non-modern architectural contexts. Jarrett mentions a specific interest in observing “the sympathy with which a reconciliation is made in Europe between advancement in technology, changing social pattern, and historical precedent; and to what extent it is successful.” Despite his earlier mention of the inevitability of history’s integration into design instruction, Jarrett’s query is rather tentative. Without assuming that the modern is simply replacing and supplanting history, he has yet to be convinced that a “sympathetic reconciliation” is possible.

Warren Platner (’55-56) took a more definitive stance on the necessity of history and its connection to modern practice in the U.S.:

…because European building has enjoyed a depth of time unknown to American architecture, and because it has also provided the main roots of our culture, an American, growing and developing with only the works of his new world around him, must look to Europe for a culture rich in tradition. He must understand his place in the present in relation to a long-developing past…

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118 Leavitt’s statement closely echoes the ideas of Labatut, demonstrating his influence on Princeton students’ thinking about history.

119Aalto had a strong, lifelong relationship with Italy that expressed itself in his work in varying ways over the decades. On this subject, see especially Schidt, Aalto, pp. 214-230 and Enrico Maria Ferrari, ed., Alvar Aalto: Il Baltico e il Mediterraneo (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1990).
Platner’s intended focus in Rome is the relationship between the two: “My study will consist not only of specific analysis and evaluation of works of the past but also of those of the present in relation to their surroundings of the past.” Such an interest shows a desire to situate current architecture in a broader cultural and historical continuum, and the entrenched belief that American culture is fundamentally an offshoot of Europe. James Gresham (’54-56) repeats his assertion that the most profound sort of cultural self-knowledge is to be found across the Atlantic: “What had happened to our traditions, that I had grown up without seemingly being conscious of them? What history and traditions an American may possess is in a large measure I believe, contained by the history of European culture.” Such statements also demonstrate a certain realism about the nature of modernist practice: even in the booming, forward-looking U.S. of the 1950s, architects could not (or should not) assume their designs enter a tabula rasa devoid of physical or social context. In a statement requesting renewal of his fellowship for a second year, Henri Jova wrote:

How a seventeenth century Baroque church can exist compatibly with a medieval palazzo on one side and the remains of a classic temple on the other is a mystery that Rome has been able to solve consistently. It has solved it in a way that creates municipal spaces that are frequently dynamically beautiful in a way that we like to believe is Modern.

While Jova saw Rome’s historic juxtapositions as exemplifying an intriguingly “modern” aesthetic, others showed a keen awareness of the gap in time, space, and culture between Italy and America:

Historical forms are not uniformly applicable to the problems of the modern city. The fountains of Rome, however grand, cannot have the same identical meaning to another era. The social, spatial, and technological facts of our age differ greatly from those of the Renaissance. Modern society is composed of diverse values and methods. The forms of our future cities must have a direct relationship to these values; contemporary technology provides a means through which they may be achieved (Charles Stifter, ’61-63).

Thus, history provides a set of valuable object lessons on how to relate architecture, culture, and time. That “contemporary technology” is seen as the proper means to mediate these competing forces is a significant reflection of the ways in which modern architecture had constructed its own essential nature, a point to which we shall return.
The sort of “relevant” history found in Rome Prize applications is also connected to modern practice in formal terms, but ones which are distilled from and kept carefully separate from the issue of style. The significance of venerated buildings and sites was often defined by Fellows in terms of highly abstract compositional qualities: “scale and proportion as related to space by actual measurement [sic] can be apprehended only by an examination of the actual monuments of the great periods” (Charles Brickbauer, ’55-57). Royston Daley (’60-62) emphasizes “the forms of volumes, interior and exterior, the space between volumes, the sequences of spaces and volumes, their proportion color scale and texture.” Other Fellows frequently express their intentions to study Italian architecture in terms of “scale,” “dimensions,” “space,” “proportion,” and “the relationship of solids to voids.”

Brickbauer, educated at Yale, and Daley, at Harvard, both evoked the fundamental and abstract compositional elements taught by Josef Albers as part of the Bauhaus’ famous Vorkurs. Similar methodologies were revived by Albers himself at Yale after 1949, and also integrated into the postwar GSD’s introductory design course.

This reduction of the venerated icons of architectural history to abstract Bauhaus formal concepts is somewhat ironic, since the Bauhaus curriculum was originally conceived as a means to “universalize” artistic values of form, color, and composition and end the basic notion of a single, authoritative aesthetic tradition. To assert that such principles should be extracted from the ideologically overburdened and academically reified Italian context (implicit in Brickbauer’s mention of “the great periods”) requires explicit justification. Thomas Dawson (’51-52) wrote that:

since I find myself most interested in the origin, purity, and meaning of architectural forms, it would seem intelligent that I choose as this environment the country which has sired so vast a number of Europe’s cultural trends, a country rich in architectural forms and their development representing a score of centuries of growth.

120 See the statements by Jarrett, Larson, Thompson, and Liebman.
History does not, therefore, validate the classical style *per se*, but demonstrate that Italy has some sort of an environmentally “genetic” superiority, which Richard Barringer ('52-53) calls “a rich tradition in...the creation of genuine architectural forms, based on the needs of society. There is much to be learned from studying the great architects and architecture of the past.” Implicit in such statements is a sort of probabilistic hope that Italy will generate or inspire the next great architectural breakthrough as well.

Robert Myers ('53-54) hoped to benefit from the “positive values in Italy’s wealth of art and architecture with the conviction that significant contemporary architecture must not disregard these values as well as the mistakes of the past.” He considered Italy the most suitable place for such a search, since it has “civilized the world twice” (presumably during Roman antiquity and the Renaissance, although Myers does not specify). Ronald Dirsmith ('58-60) was more specific:

The Academy’s situation in Rome provides an ideal center in which to study and absorb the finest manifestations of the Roman, Renaissance and Baroque civilizations. Through travel the Medieval cultures of Lombardy, France and England complete the picture. Such first-hand experiences of historic centers, their buildings, and their art cannot fail to stimulate personal growth in understanding and appreciation.

Dirsmith’s account assumes an acceptance of the fundamental value of architectural history’s sequence of “great styles,” and the idea that direct exposure to works from all of these eras will improve the architect’s intellectual and creative development.

Bernard Steinberg ('61-63) provided the most encyclopedic account of the relevant historical influences on Italy from which a modern architect can benefit:

Etruria, Greece, Rome, the Papal State, Byzantium, the semi-nomadic tribes, Aragon, the Moors, the Normans, the Lombards, and others wove themselves into the fabric of the country which later developed into the medieval and Renaissance city-states, and into modern Italy. In applying the lessons of this history to contemporary and future problems in America (or elsewhere), it is important, I believe, to maintain a comprehensive idea of Man’s existence in architectural terms.

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122 Interestingly, Myers, a GSD graduate, was working with Gropius as part of The Architects’ Collaborative at the time he wrote this statement.
Steinberg was only one among many architecture Fellows whose descriptions of history’s scope, scale, and purpose reveal lofty goals imbued with Hegelian idealism. David Leavitt pursued a clearer understanding of

the relation between man’s philosophical growth and his growing artistic and architectural concept of space….It begins with the linear efforts of the caveman, to the static art of Egypt and Greece, up through the Oriental preoccupation with planes – Medieval with structure – Renaissance with volume, on to Baroque which begins to break through the volume, to Cezanne who uses planes to create three-dimensional space, and finally arrives at the current experiments with a new dimension [sic] which, for want of a better name, is called time. This growth progresses and retrogresses, but in general follows a sweeping spiral.

This statement, with its notion of separate but interconnected intellectual and artistic ideas constituting progressively evolving, helical “threads” which define the essence of human civilization, reflected the spirit of historical interpretation used by several influential authors on modern architecture. It is seen most clearly in those authors who approached modern architecture from the Germanic art-historical tradition, with its heavily Hegelian leanings, such as Emil Kaufmann and Nikolaus Pevsner. Steinberg’s most contemporary source was likely American critic Lewis Mumford, who had published just such a large-scale synthesis in *The City in History* (1961). But a number of Fellows, beginning with Charles Wiley’s early wish to “experience the space concepts of the Classic, Renaissance and Baroque planners,” defined Rome Prize projects whose scope and phraseology echo, seem almost possessed by the spirit of one of these historians in particular: Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968).

Perhaps more than any single figure, this Swiss historian had the greatest influence on shaping young architects’ perceptions of the relationship between history and modern architecture, and enjoyed the unusual legitimacy of not being merely a commentator upon, but a prominent advocate of the cause. Giedion, who had been educated as both an engineer and an art historian, was a longtime associate and ally of Walter Gropius. The two may have met at the first Bauhaus

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123 For a discussion of the influence of Kaufmann, Pevsner, and Giedion as a group, see the chapter entitled “The Art Historians and the Founding Genealogies of Modern Architecture,” in Tournikiotis, *Historiography.*
exhibition in Weimar in 1923, which Giedion visited and reviewed, and had worked in close association through the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) since 1928, along with Le Corbusier and most of Europe’s fraternity of modern architects. Giedion had been publishing essays and books in support of the modern movement since the 1920s.

Giedion’s direct influence on young American architects began in 1938 when, thanks to the support of Gropius and Hudnut, he was appointed to give the Charles Eliot Norton Lecture series at Harvard University. The response to Giedion’s lectures, which were not only intellectually and visually revolutionary, but reputedly made incomprehensible by his poor English and convoluted presentation style, was mixed. But after his return to Zürich in 1939, these lectures would be further processed into a work whose impact on mid-century architecture would be difficult to overstate: the magisterial, biblically-scaled *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*. Published by Harvard University Press in 1941, it remains its single best-selling book, and through the 1970s would often serve as the only history text for students of modern architecture. Its saturation and influence during the postwar years can only be compared to such indispensable works as Le Corbusier’s *Vers une architecture*.

In addition to the architecture world’s broad familiarity with Giedion and his ideas through print, the author himself was a visible presence in the Ivy League Modernist world throughout most

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125 His first major book (with a dustjacket designed by Lászlo Moholy-Nagy of the Bauhaus) was *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (Leipzig and Berlin: Klinkardt und Biermann), 1928.
127 According to Sekler, 65,000 copies of this work were sold between 1941-1962, with an average of 2000 copies per year being sold in 1972. See “Giedion at Harvard,” p. 270. It was the only assigned text when my advisor Craig Zabel took an architectural history course in 1978 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign with Harvard-educated Walter L. Creese.
of the 1940s-early 1960s. Giedion returned to the U.S. after receiving an invitation to deliver the Trowbridge Lectures at Yale University in 1941, and stayed in the U.S. for the duration of the war, returning to Switzerland in December of 1945.\textsuperscript{129} He came back to the U.S. to teach at MIT in 1951, and returned to Harvard in 1954 at the invitation of José Luis Sert. Like Gropius, Sert was another longtime friend, CIAM collaborator (and its president from 1947-56), coauthor, and the GSD’s Dean and Chairman of Architecture from 1953-69.\textsuperscript{130} Soon after his arrival at Harvard, Sert had reinstated history courses (four) into the GSD’s required curriculum, ending its seven-year “history-free” period. In Giedion, who would continue to teach courses at Harvard until the early 1960s, the program had an instructor whose approach to history was designed specifically to serve the needs and interests of the modern movement.\textsuperscript{131}

By far his most influential work, \textit{Space Time and Architecture} is one of the texts which Panayotis Tournikiotis designates the “founding genealogies” of modern architecture.\textsuperscript{132} Giedion’s primary thesis is that modern architecture developed as a necessary response to a fixed set of key themes defining modern culture: industrialization, the theory of relativity, and such advances in modern art as Cubism. While such issues seem to provide little immediate motivation to go to Italy, they are embedded into a broader philosophy of culture that would be most influential. Giedion argues that a genuinely valid architecture is an expression of a civilization which is organic in structure and whose “growth” is mentioned in the book’s subtitle, and whose intellectual and artistic outlooks are in harmony. Like most other historians of modern architecture, Giedion presents the

\begin{footnotes}
\item In addition to lecturing and various venues, Giedion contributed essays to the newly founded \textit{Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians}, worked on his forthcoming book \textit{Mechanization Takes Command} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), delivered in early form at Yale in the winter of 1941 (see p. 5 of its Introduction) He also co-wrote the essay “Nine Points on Monumentality” in 1943 with José Luis Sert and Fernand Léger. For the history of this essay (not published until 1956) and related publications, see the introduction by Joan Ockman in \textit{Architecture Culture 1943-1968} (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 27-28.
\item Tournikiotis, \textit{Historiography}, pp. 21-49.
\end{footnotes}
nineteenth century as a problematic period of profound crisis, in his case because of a fundamental rift between aesthetics and technology which was ultimately resolved by the machine-age architecture of heroic modernists like Gropius and Le Corbusier.\footnote{See both Georgiadis’ discussion of Giedion’s thesis in “The First Great Synthesis,” chapter five of \textit{Giedion} (pp. 97-150). The proto-modern crisis is located and defined differently by Kaufmann, who sees its origins in Visionary Neoclassicism and the French Revolution, and Pevsner, who emphasizes the social crises of industrialization. See Tournikiotos, \textit{Historiography}, pp. 21-49.}

The idea that “authentic” expression of any sort, including architecture, requires a synthetic understanding of culture is palpable in statements like Leavitt’s interest in “the relation between man’s philosophical growth and his growing artistic and architectural concept of space.” A second application statement by Leavitt takes this idea further by defining his project for Rome as a chance to prepare materials

for the future publication of a book entitled The Concept of Space. This will include an analysis of the development of the concept of space, a discussion of the current ideas, and projection of what may be expected in the future. It will be related not only to architecture, but also to fine art, sculpture, landscape design, music and literature. It will of course, involve social, political, scientific, religious and philosophic references.\footnote{There is no evidence of any such publication coming to fruition either during or after Leavitt’s fellowship.}

The nearly infinite scope of fields included in Leavitt’s intended project closely reflects Giedion’s thesis of ideal cultural integration, and could hardly have been conceived without it. The work’s proposed title is one of many repetitions of “space concepts” found in the Rome Prize proposals. This phrase summarizes Giedion’s central architectural idea about how such integration can become architecturally manifest, and it is Giedion’s exposition of this basic idea that brings Italy into his picture.

For Giedion, a unified and fully expressed “space concept” is what defines the aesthetic and scientific nexus of any age: linear perspective for the Renaissance, infinity for the Baroque, and relativistic space-time for modernity. Although the bulk of \textit{Space, Time and Architecture} discusses the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one initial chapter entitled “Our Architectural Inheritance”
presents these two eras of architectural history as exemplary, instructive instances of past occasions in which a successful synthesis was achieved. This not only provided a significant model of how architectural history can be instructive for modern architects hoping to create similarly valid forms for the present day, but the fact that both of these historic periods are centered in Italy created a crucial link between contemporary practice and the Academy’s location in Rome.

Although Giedion’s presentation of the Baroque includes examples from across Europe (such as the Palace at Versailles and the Royal Crescent in Bath, England), the great preponderance of his examples are Italian, with a majority located in Rome itself. In the first edition of 1941, twenty-two out of the forty-five illustrations in his “pre-modern” chapter presented art, architecture, or urban spaces located in Italy. After the edition of 1954, when Giedion incorporated into the book research on Italian Renaissance and Baroque Urbanism which he had previously published in two separate articles, the preponderance of Italian exemplars increased to sixty-six out of eighty-one illustrations, of which thirty-eight were located in Rome itself. Although Space, Time and Architecture would continue to expand after 1954 with added discussions of new or newly appreciated twentieth-century architects and buildings (such as Alvar Aalto and Jørn Utzon), its Italy-heavy chapter on the “pre-history” of modern architecture remained unchanged.

This effectively created a newly framed and defined “historical” canon for modern architects of the middle and late twentieth century, one predominantly grounded in Italy and in Rome. Giedion’s presentation and analyses of the significance of buildings such as Maderno’s nave of St. Peter’s basilica or Borromini’s dome at Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza presented not their historic evolution or stylistic features, but their status as manifestations of the “space concepts” of their moment. He

135 *Space, Time, and Architecture* was itself an “organically” evolving work that grew from its first edition in 1941 (588 pages of text and 321 illustrations) to the final, twice-revised and expanded fifth edition (881 pages of text and 531 illustrations) published in 1967, the year following Giedion’s death.

often underscored their continuing significance through a formal juxtaposition of anachronistic monuments, most famously Borromini’s lantern at Sant’Ivo and Vladimir Tatlin’s Monument to the Third International project of 1920 on the same page (fig. 2.5), or by labeling Pope Sixtus V as “the first of the modern town planners” by virtue of his network of straight streets and obelisks imposing a newly “modern” order on Rome, showing that “it was in Rome that the lines of the traffic web of a modern city were first formulated, and were carried out with absolute assurance.”

Giedion’s book was innovative and influential in many ways, not least of which is its graphic style, in which images and their captions stand in near parity with the main body of text and invite the same sort of visual “reading” of an argument constructed by Le Corbusier in Vers une architecture. He was also the only historian of modern architecture to present the architecture of Italy as directly relevant to contemporary practice until Reyner Banham added the previously ignored Italian Futurism to his Theory and Design in the First Machine Age of 1960. By contrast, in Pevsner’s Outline of European Architecture of 1943, for example, these movements are embedded within a larger historical narrative that extends from the fourth to the early twentieth centuries. By extracting just the Renaissance and Baroque from the traditional continuum, Giedion gives them a new and vastly amplified contemporary importance. His book transformed these periods into far more than episodes in a centuries-long and continent-wide story by defining them as launching pads for the modern—exemplary instances of the same approach to meaning that modern architects are exhorted to pursue.

Whether consciously or by osmosis, the vast, historically underexposed readership of Giedion’s work would have absorbed ideas highly relevant to the discipline’s basic conception of history and of Rome. Most important is the notion that architectural production capable of attaining

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137 Space, Time and Architecture, fifth ed., pp. 100 and 76.
enduring validity and meaning must emerge from a broadly integrated understanding of contemporary culture. Such ideas are palpable in several statements, as when Tallie Maule ('51-52) writes, “I want the opportunity to better organize my past historical studies into a meaningful whole so that I may have a more effective springboard from which to attack present day architectural problems.” Daltas ('49-52) presents a similarly Giedionesque view of history, in which the “prime purpose for research in Europe is the study of the architectural manifestations of civilizations, past and present, in an attempt to discover what made them great and for the value they may have in giving direction to the solution of contemporary problems.” Space, Time and Architecture explicitly asserts the necessity of condensing all of history into just such a “meaningful whole” to thereby enable a modern form of practice which will make “architectural manifestations” of modern civilization. An important semantic trace of the intention to view history in a profoundly different way is the term “tradition.” This preferred alternative to the term “history” is found both in Giedion’s subtitle, in many of Gropius’ statements about the sort of history he considers relevant, and statements by Fellows such as Robert Venturi ('54-56):

I think that a progressive architect must be conscious of his tradition. In the same manner that his new buildings cannot have their complete meaning alone, they cannot be created without relation to old ones, to their particular context in time as well as place….Tradition does not consist then, of following the ways of the preceding generation, or of adhering to its successes. The architect cannot inherit tradition; he must obtain it by great labor. His knowledge of his tradition of which his work will inevitably form a part, must be empirical…

“Tradition,” as opposed to “history,” is presented as a more relevant, less authoritative, and more tractable conception of the past.139 Of course, this shift appears to primarily mark the approach to chosen exemplars, which generally speaking are selected from the traditional historical canon, à la Bannister Fletcher.

Yet while Gropius and Giedion share a preference for terminology, their identification of what embodied a relevant “tradition” privileged different historical periods. When pressed to

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identify pre-modern architecture that he considered worthwhile, Gropius would mention the Medieval, which he found socially acceptable because of the collectivism of its guild structures. Utterly unacceptable were what he called “symmetrical” (Greek and Roman) and “façade” (Renaissance) architecture. Despite their close professional alignment, the two historic, largely Italian periods of architecture exalted by Giedion for their exemplary value are Gropius’ hated Renaissance, as well as the Baroque. If praising the Renaissance was a violation of Gropius’ beliefs, Giedion’s evocation of the Baroque took him into even more broadly controversial territory, since this was a style of architecture that was still capable of rousing strong feelings and debate in the postwar years.

In late October of 1945, Roger Hinks, the newly appointed director of the British Institute in Rome, recorded in his diary his own changed reactions to familiar monuments:

I looked into the Gesú for a few minutes, but was again put off by the totalitarian atmosphere which had repelled me in St. Peter’s: I cannot see what a whole altar made of lapis lazuli has to do with a religion that enjoins the virtues of poverty and humility. But altogether I am out of sympathy with the Baroque: we know altogether too much these days about the ways of absolutism here on earth to look with complacency upon its encroachments on the life of the spirit.

Hinks’ viscerally negative reaction to the overpowering Baroque monuments of Rome reflects not only a typically Protestant reaction to propagandistic Catholic aesthetic splendor, but a politically framed perception of the uncomfortable parallels between the “totalitarian” aesthetics of the Counter-Reformation and the only just-concluded Fascist era in Europe. As a stylistic label, “Baroque” could still be seen as derogatory, or at least highly problematic in the 1940s. In a 1952,

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140 See Alofsin, Struggle for Modernism, p. 242. Importantly, it was not Gropius’ position that architects should forever ignore architectural history. He believed that too early an exposure would overwhelm and intimidate students and block their ability to develop a truly modern form of expression, so it should wait until their formal studies were complete. See Walter Gropius, “Blueprint of an Architect’s Education,” in Scope of Total Architecture (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p. 53 and Pearlman, “Hudnut’s Other Modernism,” pp. 471-72. Such a position is, of course, perfectly consistent with the postgraduate Academy fellowship programs.

Douglas Haskell, editor of the *Architectural Form*, derided the design for the United Nations General Assembly for its “elements of the modern ‘popular baroque.’” George Howe’s published response to Haskell shows the term’s ambiguity:

So it has been called the Baroque phase of modern architecture? What does Baroque mean? Grotesque, gigantesque, involved, as some might use the word, or, as others might use it, comparable to the works of that brief moment in the history of architecture when ‘measure yielded to melody, the static to the dynamic’? …I should prefer a more analytical and less emotional adjective.¹⁴²

Clearly, perception of the Baroque could be more conflicted than Giedion’s exuberant praise of the period’s dynamically “modern” spaces in Rome, which he believed exemplified the seventeenth-century Zeitgeist of expanding scientific knowledge through axial urban planning and free-flowing space. However, despite the aesthetically contrasting forms and surfaces of, for instance, Borromini and Mies van der Rohe, modern architecture and the Baroque did share a deep, largely historiographic connection in the 1940s and 50s.¹⁴³ The influential histories of modern architecture produced by Kaufmann, Pevsner, and Giedion in the 1930s and 1940s share more than the German art-historical tradition: all three men were already, or would later become, scholars of Baroque architecture.¹⁴⁴ Pevsner and Giedion’s earliest publications were studies of different aspects of this movement, while Kaufmann’s scholarship proceeded chronologically “backwards” from modern architecture to the French Revolution, and ultimately his mid-1950s study of the Baroque architecture of Italy, France and Britain.


¹⁴³ Interestingly, the term “baroque” is used to describe several of Aalto’s projects, such as his 1939 Finnish Pavilion for the New York World’s Fair (Ray, Aalto, p. 38, caption to fig. 23) and his Church of the Three Crosses at Vuoksenniska of 1955-58; see Peter Reed, “Alvar Aalto and the New Humanism of the Postwar Era,” in Reed, ed., *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998) p. 105.

¹⁴⁴ Giedion was a student of renowned and pioneering Baroque scholar Heinrich Wölfflin, and his thesis on late Baroque and Neoclassical architecture (*Spätbarocker und romantischer Klassizismus*) was published in 1922. Pevsner’s first two published books from 1928 are on Baroque architecture (*Leipziger Barock: die Baukunst der Barockzeit in Leipzig*) and Baroque painting (*Barockmaleri in den romanischen ländern: 1. t. Die italienische maleri vom ende der renaissance bis zum ausgehenden rokoko*). The last book by Emil Kaufmann, published posthumously in 1955, is his *Architecture in the Age of Reason: Baroque and Post-Baroque in England, Italy, and France*. This is equally true of Rudolf Wittkower, whose effect on architecture of the 1950s will be discussed below.
The Baroque had been finding its way into academic art history since the pioneering late nineteenth century studies of such scholars as Heinrich Wölfflin, Giedion’s academic advisor at the University of Basel.145 At the prewar American Academy, it was considered artistically and academically objectionable as a topic of study or artistic emulation. Italian Baroque architecture would only attain full art historical legitimacy in 1958, when the publication of Rudolf Wittkower’s volume for the Pelican History of Art series officially inserted it into the Anglophone canon.146 But even years before this, a number of postwar Fellows explicitly identify the Baroque as an architectural era from which they expect to learn:

…if I examine contemporary architecture to search out its most glaring lack, I cannot help but come to the conclusion that what is perhaps most particularly absent in the ‘modern movement’ is an understanding, (or worse, the absence of even the desire for an understanding), of the rich and meaningful forms developed during the Baroque period in Italy. I should like…to be perhaps one day able to incorporate their essence into my own design in such a manner as to contribute toward the recognition of their virtues by the contemporary architectural design world. (Dawson, ’51-52)

Dawson presents the Baroque as not only a precursor to, but a crucial corrective for the “most glaring lack” in modern architecture, which in his view could only benefit from an injection of the essence of that period’s “rich and meaningful forms.” Similarly, Venturi writes in 1954:

A city like Rome, in its individual buildings and especially in its planning, can have particular relevance to my own interests and, I believe, to the problems of our architecture. Its Mannerist and Baroque buildings can reveal a richness and intricacy which we are realizing the need for now in our architecture. Its Baroque piazzas reveal a sensibility in the relationship of buildings which we have a chance of paralleling, perhaps for the first time since the 16th century, now that our architecture of the individual buildings is beginning to develop a consistent vocabulary.

Crucially, the conception of the contributions of Baroque architecture found in Giedion and other scholars is not limited to the scale of individual buildings, but extends out into the city. Along with the necessity of travel, the relevance of Italy, and the place of history, the Rome Prize Fellows are

drawn to the Academy during the postwar years to explore and question the problem of city-making. Once again, this is a concern that will connect Rome to issues that lay at the heart of the mission of modern architecture.

**Project Proposals III: Rome and Urbanism**

To date, the only published statement which characterizes architectural interests at the postwar Academy summarizes them as follows:

After the fall of Classicism in the 1940s, architects who went to the American Academy in Rome had to find something other than Classical and Renaissance architecture to study. They turned to more abstract pursuits like urban design, Townscape-influenced urban space studies, and anonymous and vernacular traditions. It was not until the late '70s that fellows in architecture came back to the material which Charles Follen McKim had specified as ‘proper’ for a young architect to study.147

Its author, Thomas Schumacher, was himself a Rome Prize Fellow in architecture from 1967-69, the period immediately following this study.148 As we have seen, his reference to “more abstract pursuits” captures well the ways in which previous Fellows redefined the aesthetic value of Italy’s historic architecture in terms intended to retain and modify its cultural significance for a new era. While the “anonymous and vernacular traditions” Schumacher mentions are the subject of two Rome Prize proposals from this period, those by Dan Stewart ('55-'57) and Robert Golder ('61-'63), the interest most strongly substantiated by the project proposals is urbanism, found in sixteen out of thirty-eight essays.149 Its importance increases during the period in question, becoming the single

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148 Schumacher has published widely on the work of Giuseppe Terragni, and studied under Colin Rowe at Cornell.
149 Stewart’s statement presents a rather sentimentalizing view of Italy’s “primitive” peasants, in whose “warm and serene outlook on life” he expected to find “the more basic and fundamental art forms.” Golder’s essay is an extensive and theoretically sophisticated discussion of Mediterranean folk architecture, whose “etiology and dynamics of form” he proposed to study. Golder’s statement of 1961 predates and anticipates an interest in the vernacular given prominence by Bernard Rudofsky’s famous “Architecture Without Architects” exhibit of 1964 at the Museum of Modern Art.
most common interest found in those between 1960-1966.\textsuperscript{150} Frequently intertwined with the other themes discussed above—the cultural relevance of Italy as a destination and the value of its historic architecture—is the explicit desire to absorb and understand what makes Rome and other Italian cities aesthetically and socially successful urban environments.

To most American architects arriving after World War II, Italy’s cities were unlike anything they had experienced in the U.S., and substantially different from the sort of urban ideals emphasized by the Modern Movement. As Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown wrote retrospectively in 1972,

\begin{quote}
For young Americans in the 1940s, familiar only with the auto-scaled, gridiron city and the antiurban theories of the previous architectural generation, the traditional urban spaces, the pedestrian scale, and the mixtures, yet continuities, of styles of the Italian piazzas were a significant revelation. They rediscovered the piazza.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

In Venturi and Scott Brown’s formulation, the shock of Italy is primarily, even exclusively, defined in urban terms. This is noteworthy, given that Venturi is best known for the interest in Mannerist and Baroque buildings famously celebrated in his \textit{Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture} of 1966. While his Rome Prize proposal does mention his interest in the architecture of these periods, it primarily considers Italian urban environments and how they structure social interaction. His statement is worth quoting at length:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{150} Nine date to the years 1960-1966, when there were fourteen Rome Prizes awarded in architecture overall.
\textsuperscript{151} Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, \textit{Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form}, Revised edition (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997). Although they were not yet acquainted, Venturi and Scott Brown were actually in Rome during the same period in 1955: while Venturi was at the Academy, Scott Brown worked with architect Giuseppe Vaccaro in Rome and attended the CIAM summer school in Venice. However, this particular statement likely captures Venturi’s initial, individual reaction to 1940s Italy. He had traveled there in 1948 with his parents, and presents its impact from a specifically American perspective. Scott Brown was born in Zambia and educated in South Africa and London, coming to the U.S. only in 1958, so her own first view of Rome would have been colored by a very different and entirely non-American set of urban and cultural experiences. That said, the influential analytical strategies through which they linked Rome, Las Vegas, and the American suburbs reflect Scott Brown’s own interests in urbanism and sociology. See Diane Minnite’s “Chronology” in David Brownlee, David De Long, and Kathryn Hiesinger, \textit{Out of the Ordinary: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates} (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University of Art, 2001), pp. 246-47, and the January 3, 2002 interview by Martino Stierli held in the American Academy in Rome Archives.
\end{quote}
A city like Rome, in its individual buildings and especially in its planning, can have particular relevance to my own interests and, I believe, to the problems of our architecture…Its Baroque piazzas reveal a sensibility in the relationship of buildings which we have a chance of paralleling, perhaps for the first time since the 18th century, now that our architecture of the individual building is beginning to develop a consistent vocabulary. This constant, dependable refinement of Rome’s outdoor spaces resulting from a recognition of both continuity and contrast in its development, its easy monumentality, its pedestrian scale, its planning which stimulates a sense of community, are all uncommon elements in the 19th and 20th century city known to an American architect, which I would like to become familiar with.

My project would consist of an analysis of those elements in the planning of certain Italian cities which accommodate or even stimulate the sense of community mentioned above. The rich urban life of typical European cities, in the civic plaza and the marketplace as in Venice, in the promenade as in the Champs Elysees and the Galeria [sic] Vittorio Emanuele, in the Parisian outdoor café, or in the residential neighborhood itself, has represented a strong tradition in Western city culture. The 19th and 20th century city, especially in America, has tended to lose this tradition. Some of the reasons for this might be the increased size of its urban communities, a tendency towards decreased density in housing, separation between living and working accommodations, the dominance of the gridiron plan, and the subordination of the pedestrian to the automobile. Its pathetic remnants of urban life appear in the gatherings of so-called ‘street corner society’, the occasional park which accommodates the town misfits, the monumental plaza always empty…. The city which consists merely of many people living close together, even if in sanitary accommodations, has failed of course to be a city in the full sense, to provide for the rich experience of civic living. I think, therefore, that an analysis of this subject applied to certain Italian cities would be timely.

Venturi generalizes the physical structure of a “typical” European city as conducive to pedestrian use, social interaction, and an integrated and “rich urban life” supporting civic vitality through scale, plazas, and other design elements. By contrast, the “rational” American city that separates and accommodates functions and automobile traffic through zoning and freeways has had a deadening effect on community life.

Venturi’s contemporary, Warren Platner (’55-56), was similarly critical of American urban design:

Our architecture is most lacking in the careful relationships of one building to another, in the responsibility of the architect to a whole community which he must enrich and from which he must in no way detract. Building within a city is, in a sense, a remodeling process as the erecting of a new building can completely change the effect of the existing buildings and spaces; it can enhance or it can impair.
Platner’s critique emphasizes urban design as a set of formal issues, an approach that is also found in Royston Daley’s (’60-62) essay:

In particular, my interest is in the form and sequence of urban spaces and related groups of buildings, for it is here that American architecture for all its individual buildings of high quality has failed most sadly. We have created isolated gems without understanding how buildings relate, modify and define one another and without heed for the importance of the spaces between buildings and the wonderful opportunity for elegance or gayety and general visual delight they afford. America, the creator of the 20th century city, has been unable to give that city coherent form and expression.

Interestingly, Daley ignores the decades-long efforts of the City Beautiful movement to achieve just the sort of “elegance” and “visual delight” of a coherently conceived ensemble of related structures, albeit in a discredited stylistic language. But in the case of Italy, Daley and Platner seem prepared to look “through” architectural style, so to speak, in order to discern how to create harmonious urban ensembles out of stylistically and historically heterogeneous structures.

Unlike such primarily formalist critiques, Venturi’s interest in a design and social corrective to America’s ailing cities was taken even further by Joseph Amisano (’51-52), who devoted the greatest part of his Rome Prize essay to a diagnosis of its urban failures. He saw cities’ survival as the “nerve centers” of the nation as a central social problem: “To maintain a healthy country, our cities must provide something beyond man’s need for ‘a decent place to live.” Amisano diagnosed their key problem as the “absence of a comprehensible scale—the kind we can visualize at [sic] the words ‘village green.’” He frames the architect’s proper role in terms of intervention within the city, not control over its extent:

We cannot justifiably define the proper size of a city: that must be the outcome of the natural forces motivating its functions—commercial, industrial, governmental, cultural. But we can try to find “the thing”—for want of an all-inclusive word—that spells community; an attraction such as the market place has had for centuries, or an acropolis, forum, agora, cathedral square, piazza—some architectural complex, big or small, around which revolves the life of a people.
Amisano never refers to Italy directly in his essay: only certain terms, like “forum” and “piazza,” have any geographic or historic specificity. His essay continues to propose a design project consisting of a neighborhood improvement plan for part of Harlem, New York, “because the need is greatest.” Thus he presents one of the most unusual arguments for Rome’s relevance to contemporary American architecture: without explicitly outlining exactly why the Academy is the logical place to pursue such a project, Amisano brings there the cause of community development through urban design for the most prominently African-American neighborhood in the U.S.\footnote{The Academy’s approval of this unusually progressive project proposal is especially noteworthy; it was apparently the simultaneous recipient of the Rome Prize and a Guggenheim grant for 1951. Amisano was the lone graduate of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to win a Rome Prize from 1947-66, so he came from outside the AAR’s network of supporting academic institutions. He was employed by Harrison and Abramovitz from 1941-42, but they would not become directly involved with the Academy until Harrison joined the Board of Trustees in 1959. It appears that the jury must have responded strongly to the merits of his proposed project. I have not located evidence of whatever degree of work was carried out on this proposed neighborhood design at the Academy by Amisano, who spent most of his later career practicing in Atlanta, Georgia as part of the firm of Avery, Toombs and Amisano.} He only implies that being in Rome will allow him to observe and experience European cities whose physical structures engender successful community life, and that such qualities will somehow come to permeate his own design proposal for a very different reality.

Even among those Fellows who focus on urbanism, such faith in the relevance and value of Italian cities is not always assumed \textit{a priori}. Some convey a degree of skepticism, as when Milo Thompson (’63-’65) proposes to pursue his consuming interest…in the scale and dimension of major urban structures and spaces—in particular as to the validity of certain existing spaces being regarded as the measure of high standard for the design of a good space and to evaluate or to come to some conclusion as to the application of these ‘standards’ in light of twentieth century needs and requirements.

Both the scare quotes around the term “standards” and his indirect language indicate that Thompson went to Rome knowing that certain spaces were generally \textit{considered} exemplary, but that he himself was not yet convinced. His essay states that his general concern is with what he calls “the integration of the microenvironment with its larger environment,” or “the successful integration of a new and larger scale which encompasses but maintains the scale of things which man before
industry and modern technology has lived with.” These somewhat opaque statements seem to encompass a rather large field of physical and social phenomena, and obliquely suggest a state of alienation within an urban life of expanding scale. From the letter he submitted requesting a renewal of his fellowship, however, Thompson appears to have found a productive urban model in Italy. He describes his ongoing work on designs for “a three-dimensional circulation structure for high density population” as a collaborative project with “two friends from the British School” that builds on earlier work he carried out at Harvard.\footnote{This reference to cooperation with fellows of the British School at Rome is one of very few documented references I’ve found to inter-academic collaboration among foreign architects in Rome.} He further describes the relevance of Italy to this work:

> The problems of cities are illustrated abundantly here. More importantly, illustrations of the magnetism and great beauty of cities are also abundant. (Interesting sidelights are the hilltowns near Rome—a nearly literal example of some of the physical aspects of my project though the idea and final form of it being significantly different.)

Thompson describes his developing designs as vertically zoned, “multilevel ramped street systems—actually structures—which contain or support between them ‘building sites.”’ His mention of their similarity to dense, vertically structured hill towns makes the analogy sound accidental rather than inspirational. But his mention of Italian cities’ “magnetism and great beauty” suggests that he may have acquired a greater, more definite faith in the potential of urban form to structure a more “integrated” form of life even in the modern era.

A more definite theme found in multiple urbanistic proposals is an interest in a specific, distinctively “Italian” and increasingly emphasized element of city design: the piazza. Mentioned in passing by Amisano, it is the characteristic structure that embodies much of the idealized community life celebrated and sought by Venturi. Platner defined urban design and the city itself as an abstract compositional exercise: “The urban world is one of spaces created by and walled by buildings, where the molding of exterior and interior space is an all-important art.” More than any other identifiable element, the piazza embodies just such a notion, an exterior, urban-scale “space created by and
walled by buildings.” Theodore Liebman (’64-66) goes so far as to define the experience of a single iconic piazza as the *sine qua non* of his own future practice:

Since completing my formal education, I have been a designer for the new Government Center in Boston, and I have had to make design decisions affecting urban public spaces, building relationships, and architectural scale and character. Without having even seen the square of St. Peter’s, can I fully discharge this responsibility? No, I must see it and more before I can produce my own work with conviction.\textsuperscript{154}

Liebman thus turns the space framed by Bernini’s famous colonnades into a measure of the contemporary validity of his own design work. The Piazza San Pietro is specifically mentioned again by Thomas Larson (’62-’64) as one of the iconic urban spaces he proposes to study from the Academy for their “integration of art with architecture” (the others mentioned are Rome’s Campidoglio, the Piazza del Campo in Siena, the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, and the Piazza San Marco in Venice). He argues that:

Detailed investigation into subtle relationships of the art of these Squares as manifested by the design of buildings, open spaces, statues, fountains, etc., and the resulting interaction of the whole would give me a greater knowledge and understanding of the principles of urban design.

In Larson’s formulation, to study and understand the piazza, therefore, is to understand the city itself. An even broader project based on comparative piazza analysis is that of Robert Mittelstadt (’64-66). His project was “to study in total the esthetics of urban design” in order to better comprehend “the nature of the urban public space” through a comparative study of European and American sites, wherein each will be analyzed according to a set of abstract, primarily formal, criteria.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{154} Liebman’s renewal request letter states that he spent time in the studio of Carlo Aymonino to observe ongoing work on the Ten Year Master Plan for the city of Rome.

\textsuperscript{155} Mittelstadt’s essay names the following U.S. sites for his study: “Washington Square in Manhattan, Beacon Hill in Boston, the New Haven Green, Mt. Vernon & Washington Places in Baltimore, and The Mall in Washington, D.C. as basic American examples, each representing a specific character of space.” He does not specify his European examples. Mittelstadt’s renewal letter notes that he had participated in work on a “new urban plan for Rome” at the Studio Severino in Rome. Mittelstadt actually left the Academy early in his second year because he won the design competition for a Civic Center in Fremont, California.
Some Fellows were primarily interested in comparing contemporary cities to the urbanism of specific historic periods. Charles Stifter (‘61-’63) describes his own interest in the urbanism of the Italian Renaissance, although he defines its relevance in terms of its ongoing use and appeal:

The cities of our age are dominated by the expanding needs of industry and commerce. They achieve little harmony in their component parts, no unity in their diversity. In contrast, the Renaissance city was conceived as a social and architectural entity.

One primary lesson that may be learned from the Renaissance city is that planning must be considered in a scope larger than individual buildings. The significance of the Italian piazza does not only encompass its visual beauty, but also that it forms a focus for many diverse activities. Much of the appeal of great spaces is that at one moment they may be thronged, the next, empty. Filled with shoppers, afternoon strollers, and vendors, the piazzas of Italy both contain and give order to much of the excitement that characterizes a vital city. To live and study in those areas which were initially created from an urban ideal constitutes one method of attaining a greater insight into the potentialities of the urban environment.

The central problem is finding the proper “harmony” between form and culture. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Stifter has an acute consciousness of the cultural gap between a period of the Renaissance and his own day, and explicitly and carefully states that his interest in the continuous success of a centuries-old “urban ideal” does not aim at copying its forms. What his essay captures is a palpable desire to understand and distill into transplantable form the myriad forces that produced the life and vitality witnessed in Italian cities so that these can be transplanted into a modern, American context. That Stifter identifies the essence of these forces through rational plans produced by socially and intellectually conscious designers more clearly reflects the hopes of his own moment than the immensely complex matrix of phenomena that actually shaped such environments historically.

Unlike Stifter’s tendency to frame Italy’s urban successes as the product of insightful individuals working in a specific historic period, Royston Daley credits them to much more diffuse cultural forces:

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156 See the excerpts from Stifter’s statement cited in the discussion on history, p. 41 above.
Rome is the center of one of the oldest urban civilizations, one which has spanned the centuries, in some cases unbroken for over 2000 years, up to the present. As a result, one can see the changes of forms and spaces reflecting the shifting of values and functions of each age, yet sense the certain continuity of Mediterranean urbanity embodying the concept of a public life of shared activities with one’s fellow citizens. This public life is reflected in the basilicas, fora, piazzas, churches, baths, temples and arenas of each city. Implicit in this and complementary to it is the Mediterranean idea of a private urban life expressed in the ubiquitous town houses with their largely blank exterior walls and interior gardens, courtyards, atriums and peristyles. Through the study of the quality of Mediterranean and specifically Italian urban life as expressed in its buildings and spaces, it is expected that many lessons pertinent to today’s problems will be learned.

For Daley, Rome provides a case study of a vastly larger set of phenomena that extend throughout the entire Mediterranean basin and across millennia of history. The sort of urban environments being praised and contemplated are seen as an almost natural product, one which evolved gradually out of social structures and practices, climate, and geography, as well as building practices and types. In his formulation, cities are a reflection of what culture demands, embodiments of a population’s “concepts of public life.” Such an organic relationship between city and life is similarly expressed in Bernard Steinberg’s (’61-63) reference to “the highly developed Italian sense for towns.”

Taken in aggregate, these essays on urbanism all express in their varying ways a longing for the cultural and experiential wealth of the pedestrian-scaled environments that were, if not entirely absent, already a diminishing rarity in an increasingly auto-centric and suburbanized U.S. They frequently over-generalize incredibly complex and physically, geographically and historically varied phenomena under convenient but problematic labels. To refer to “Italian urbanism” in the singular amalgamates a set of complex and multivalent phenomena comprising multiple and highly heterogeneous approaches to city-building over millennia of history. The dense, irregular three-dimensionality of Medieval hill towns, whose origins often reach back to the pre-classical era, differs formally, socially, and politically from the rational grids of Roman Imperial cities or the vast axes and regularized piazzas forcibly inserted during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Furthermore, Italy’s Fascist government extensively restructured and remade many environments to privilege and
advantageously present specific cities and districts as “historic” for ideological purposes, in ways that often remained invisible to later visitors. The romantic notion of the picturesquely historic “Italian city” also stood in contrast to Italy’s widespread postwar reconstruction which seldom, if ever, reproduced the sort of culturally harmonious, urbanistically successful cities that Americans came to study.

However, this analytical approach is quite consistent with an influence mentioned in Schumacher’s summary of Academy projects: the Townscape movement. Centered in Great Britain, and advocated in particular by the journal *Architectural Review*, it was one of many postwar movements that actively questioned what had become increasingly considered a rigid modernist orthodoxy. The Townscape movement analyzed the effects of urban ensembles, dissecting what were typically irregular, picturesque built environments in search of structuring compositional principles. As defined by Gordon Cullen,

…there is an art of relationship just as there is an art of architecture. Its purpose is to take all the elements that go to create the environment: buildings, trees, nature, water, traffic, advertisements and so on, and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released.

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This “art of relationship” captures what most of the Rome Prize urbanists hoped to learn from Italian cities. Cullen notes that although creating a functional city is a complex undertaking that depends greatly upon multiple forms of scientific expertise (“demographers, sociologists, engineers, traffic experts”), but argues that “if at the end of it all the city appears dull, uninteresting and soulless, then it is not fulfilling itself. It has failed.” Multiple built environments are then analyzed according to an enormous array of formal, usually visual qualities. Generally linked by the concept of “serial vision,” or the sequence of visual phenomena that unfold for the viewer, successful ensembles are dissected through a variety of evocative concepts and elements: “enclosure,” “outdoor rooms,” “thereness,” “deflection,” and “captured space” are only a few examples.

Although Cullen’s studies emphasize British towns, his colleague Ivor de Wolfe conducted similar analyses of Italian urban environments, published in book form in 1963. The Townscape movement’s analysis of the physical and visual structure of traditional, scenically pleasing environments was a continuation of critiques begun by Camillo Sitte (1843-1903). Sitte’s 1889 *Der Städte-Bau nach seinem künstlerischen Grundsätzen* was first published in English in 1945, and may well have contributed to the Townscape movement’s birth. It was one of many responses to an increasing dissatisfaction with the sort of urban environments produced after World War II. Urbanism and the Modern Movement had always been closely associated. The primary concern of the *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) that emerges from its decades of conferences and publications is an ongoing effort “to set out a clear ‘party line’ on urbanism and the relation of architecture to society.” Radical urban visions of Ludwig Hilbersheimer and Le Corbusier (such as the latter’s *Ville Radieuse* proposals) had exerted the greatest influence on the principles codified in

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the CIAM “Charter of Athens” of 1943, setting out its best-known urban doctrine, the diagrammatic
“Functional City,” dividing all human activities into four functional categories (dwelling, work,
transportation and recreation) and promoting separate physical domains for each.\textsuperscript{165}

The ultimate influence of CIAM-inspired urbanism on postwar redevelopment in both
Europe and the U.S. would prove highly complex and contentious.\textsuperscript{166} However, it had two
important and clear results relevant to a reading of the Rome Prize proposals in urbanism. The first
is that, despite the increasing autonomy of urban and regional planning as a discipline from
architecture during the twentieth century, the concept of “modern architecture” incorporated both
these two spheres of design.\textsuperscript{167} Because of this, the modern architect was framed as a figure whose
creative, problem-solving imagination should be unleashed on problems of human activity,
circulation, and aesthetics for entire districts, cities, and even regions, not merely confined within the
perimeters of individual buildings.\textsuperscript{168} The frequent use of the term “planner” as a preferred synonym
for “architect” by figures such as Gropius and Giedion contributes to this conception: more
detached from the fine-arts and (in their view) “elitist” notion of design and more closely connected

\textsuperscript{165} See Le Corbusier, \textit{The Athens Charter} (New York: Grossman Brothers, 1973). The proceedings of the 4\textsuperscript{th} CIAM
conference of 1933 were published by Le Corbusier a decade later.

\textsuperscript{166} Mumford discusses in depth the very complicated relationships between CIAM’s documents and members and the
extensive postwar housing and reconstruction projects often stereotyped as direct results of its influence. See especially his concluding remarks in \textit{The CIAM Discourse}, pp. 268-74.

\textsuperscript{167} On the early history of City Planning as an academic discipline, first established at Harvard in 1929, see Bernard
Cohen, “Harvard and MIT: Where It All Began,” \textit{Planning} 47 no. 3 (March 1981): 23-26, as well as the discussion in
Alofsin, \textit{The Struggle for Modernism}, p. 42-46, 64-66. The lasting integration of building and urban design in modern
architecture is especially evident in a work like Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco dal Co’s \textit{Modern Architecture}, trans. R. W.
Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979). Their Marxist-leaning history of the modern movement devotes eight out of
its twenty-one chapters to the history of urban form. Sigfried Giedion’s \textit{Space, Time and Architecture} is an earlier example
of the importance given to urban design in histories of modern architecture. Its continuing importance to this subject is
evidence from its citation as an important source in A.E.J. Morris’s \textit{History of Urban Form Before the Industrial Revolutions},

\textsuperscript{168} Tafuri and dal Co summarized the CIAM’s utopian philosophy thus: “In flatly mechanistic fashion it applied to the
entire urban scale the system of design and production applicable to the small scale of the private dwelling. The policy
proposed by the CIAM transformed the role of the architect into that of organizer of a cycle of production,
presupposing that the new models envisaged would be per se guarantee of an absolute control over all the functions that
set the course of urban development. The CIAM discussions made it seem almost as if the nature of the city was
thought to be identical with that of the architecture it contained, so that once control over the modes of formation and
production of the buildings that made up the city was assured, one would also have the key to planning its entire
development.” \textit{Modern Architecture}, p. 246.
to scientifically “objective” social and technological problem-solving, it also shows a preference for urban-scale thinking.

The second point is that urban design remained a central, highly visible topic in architectural circles of the 1940s-1960s. One important proof of this is the proliferation of seminars and discussions on city and regional planning among architects during these years. Both before and following World War II, the CIAM congresses consistently treated architecture and urbanism as intrinsically and necessarily integrated disciplines, and attempted to define an “orthodox” (if unstable) modernist approach to both until the organization’s formal dissolution in 1959.169 By 1951, the changing nature of debate is evident from the titles of the CIAM congresses, such as “The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanization of Urban Life” (CIAM 8, Hoddeston, England); Additional, extra-CIAM conferences and symposia on the city would proliferate during these years, such as the 1947 Princeton seminar led by Alvar Aalto entitled “Planning Man’s Physical Environment.”170

Importantly, the centrality of this issue is attested by a Conference on Urban Design held at the American Academy itself in 1966.171 It was moderated by Edmund Bacon, both an Academy Trustee and the Executive Director of Philadelphia City Planning, and other prominent participants included architect Bruno Zevi (general secretary of the Italian Town Planning Institute), Wolfgang Lotz (Director of the Biblioteca Herziana), and Aldo van Eyck, the Academy’s Architect in Residence at that time.172 Its stated purpose was to “explore principles of design which can produce

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171 The American Academy conference was held from March 21-30, 1966; see the American Academy in Rome Annual Report 1965-66, p. 26, AAR Archives.
172 Bacon is well-known for his extended conflicts with Louis Kahn over Kahn’s proposed redevelopment designs for the city of Philadelphia. See Carter Weisman, Louis I. Kahn: Beyond Time and Style (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), p. 88-91. Organized by former Academy Director Richard Kimball, other named participants include Italian architects Luigi Piccinato and Pier Maria Lugli, Italian engineer Riccardo Morandi, U.S. composer Elliot Carter, sculptor Dimitri Hazdi,
coherence in modern urban living,” with listed special topics that included “The Role of Government in Structuring the City,” “Ways of Perceiving the City: The Architect’s Concept,” “Evolution of Form Over Time,” “Structuring the City: Experience Through Design” and “The City as Form and Rhythm.” Such titles echo the central ideas proposed by many architecture Fellows in the years just prior to this event.

These events were part of increasing debates among architects about architecture, society, and the nature of the city. These were generally divided into camps which supported a continuation of the functionalist approach, and those who advocated “humanizing” modern architecture and urbanism in varying ways. Interestingly, the approaches to Italian cities seen in the Rome Prize proposals reflect the influence of both camps: the notion that the essence of its urbanistic successes could be reduced to a set of analytical data regarding proportions of street width to building height, typological elements, and social functions reflects the sort of pseudo-scientific analyses favored by the Gropian functionalists. To those critical of this approach, the Townscape-inspired notion of a seemingly “anonymous” medieval environment characterized by geometric irregularity, pleasingly tactile and often uniform building materials offered an appealing corrective to the over-designed diagrammatic spaces of corporate/capitalist late modernism. For prospective Fellows, to discuss their interest in Italy in terms of urbanism was to be professionally “current” in

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174 One of the most famous debates is of course on the subject of “monumentality,” in response to Lewis Mumford’s 1937 declaration that such a quality is inimical to modern architecture; see “The Death of the Monument,” in Martin, Nicholson, and Gabo, eds., Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1937). We will return to this important issue in greater detail in Chapter 3.

175 Lázló Moholy-Nagy memorably summarizes the functionalist position in his introduction to Walter Gropius’ Rebuilding Our Communities (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1945), p. 12: “Gropius teaches us that it is impossible to speak about a new architecture as long as people are deceived by sentimental appeals to an appreciation of stylish facades, obsolete dwellings, ‘monumentality,’ and cold pomp. Gropius started with ‘architecture beautiful,’ and through a development of ‘architecture structural’ he arrived at the architecture of the ‘planned’…”
light of ongoing debates, and also to be ideologically progressive, since the cause of better cities intrinsically ties one’s creative ambitions to the service of larger social needs.

Despite these limitations, the preoccupation with the traditional cities of Italy found in so many Fellows’ essays echoes a much larger set of architectural debates about the city during this same period. When Venturi contrasts the “monumental plaza always empty” in the U.S. and the “naturally” vital Italian piazza in 1954, both his language and his concerns are deeply prophetic of Peter Blake’s later, scathing comparison of New York’s Rockefeller Center, still the city’s most successful urban ensemble and outdoor space, and the nearby development on Sixth Avenue (Avenue of the Americas) in the early 1960s.

The new Sixth Avenue is a chaotic agglomeration of piazzas, piazzettas, piazzettinas, arcades, and ‘courts.’ Where the motto of the Beaux Arts period was ‘when in doubt, do a boulevard,’ the motto of today’s architects seems to be ‘when in doubt, do a plaza.’

Blake diagnosed this adoption of the piazza as an element intended to humanize enormous curtain-wall clad corporate towers, a precedent established most prominently by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson at the Seagram Building (1955-58), but one which only occasionally had the desired effects. He scorns an apparent fixation upon the intrinsic value of such elements, while insufficient attention is paid to what actually makes such spaces hospitable and effective in an urban context. His critique suggests both that late modernist architects were consciously attempting to import something of the success of the Italian city, but were somehow incapable of making it work.

Blake’s lament of 1965 captures the architectural world’s ongoing preoccupation with the problems of the city and its own ability to resolve them satisfactorily. It demonstrates that the young designers applying for Rome Prize fellowships were not alone in attempting to find in Italy

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176 Peter Blake, “Slaughter on Sixth Avenue,” *The Architectural Forum* 122 no. 3 (June 1965): 17.
corrective principles for an architectural ideology seen to be producing increasingly barren and dysfunctional urban landscapes. If anything, they were perfectly in tune with the larger discipline in hoping to reconcile the hopes of modernist utopianism with the aesthetically and experientially inspiring urban environments they knew Italy offered.

**Project Proposals IV: Engineering and the Edges of Architecture**

A handful of Rome Prize proposals define distinctive projects which stand apart from the more frequently recurring themes of educational travel, history, stylistic juxtapositions and urbanism, framing Italy’s relevance to modern architectural issues in distinctive terms. Like the few graduates of “outsider” schools who earned Rome Prizes, they demonstrate that the Academy, while still generally operating within a specific framework of architectural institutions and interests, was not rigidly encased within it. That the following projects earned their authors the Rome Prize also shows an Academy that was willing to sponsor and associated itself with work further out on the edges of architecture’s disciplinary boundaries.

Two of the three projects align themselves more directly with the field of engineering than that of architecture. Both Stanley Pansky (’52-53) and Wayne Taylor (’60-62) proposed projects for Rome that were concerned with exploring modern materials technology. Pansky’s essay discusses the general and popular topic of the desirability of visiting firsthand the “products of Western culture [which] stand for the most part in Europe,” but the substance of his essay is about specific individuals and a very specific project:

The architect Guido Fiorini published many years ago a project for a steel skyscraper in which almost all loads were carried in tension, and compression was confined to a few large members. The engineer-architect Nervi has been doing beautiful work in concrete employing the same structural principles.
Fiorini was an Italian architect associated with both the Rationalists and the Futurists in the 1931, and the tensile skyscraper project that Pansky mentions is probably the design he patented in 1931 (fig. 2.6). Pansky was sufficiently inspired by this project to propose using his Rome Prize to rethink the steel frame skyscraper in similar terms. He points out that earlier designs like Fiorini’s were impractical because of the need to encase the steel members in fireproofing. Thanks to newly developed materials used for “jet engines and turbo-superchargers,” he writes, “I maintain that buildings of marvelous lightness and beauty can be built by utilizing high-strength fireproof steel in the stressed skin (monocoque) construction so familiar in aircraft design.” He believes that such applications of materials typically used in such non-architectural, although both “practical and beautiful” contexts, will increase the structural and economic efficiency of large-scale buildings.

Panksy’s statement goes into an unusual degree of technical detail compared to the other Fellows (“A 14WF68 section 20 feet long will carry over 60% more load in tension than it will in compression”). In fact, his undergraduate education was in the field of engineering, which he studied at both New York University and the Illinois Institute of Technology, an intellectual viewpoint that is consistent with his professed interests. However, he later earned a B.Arch at the GSD in 1950, and this approach is also consistent with one highly influential current within the Modern Movement. While his technological determinism captures the early spirit of modern architecture’s faith in the beauty of structural efficiency, this was an idea that remained highly current in the postwar years. Not only had Sigfried Giedion defined the architectural aesthetics of the modern Zeitgeist in terms of both spatial conceptions and industrial technologies, but his follow-up volume to Space, Time and Architecture was a work intended to buttress its cultural groundwork. The 1948 volume

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179 Pansky does not indicated where he saw this project published. It does not appear to have received much attention in the U.S.’s contemporary architectural or popular press, but is among several discussed by Ezio Godoli in Guide all’architettura moderna: Il Futurismo (Rome: Laterza, 1983), pp. 154-164; see also Enrico Crispolti, Attraverso l’architettura futurista (Modena: Galleria Fonte d’Abisso Edizioni, 1984), pp. 112-113, 212-213.

180 Pansky’s connection between buildings and turbines inevitably brings to mind the evocative images used by Le Corbusier in Vers une architecture. Fiorini in fact worked briefly with Le Corbusier during his years in Paris (1920-1930).
Mechanization Takes Command is a book that argues for a relentless march of technological development as the primary engine of Western culture in everything from agriculture and bread-making to lock-making and railroads.\(^{181}\) However, while such technological emphases had their own currency, Pansky’s statement does not mention the fact that Fiorini’s activities and interests had shifted dramatically from the prewar years. He was still an accessible figure in Rome, where he had taught theater set design at both the Università di Roma’s Facoltà di Architettura and at the Experimental Centre of Cinematography since 1937. It is unclear whether he would have been interested in returning to the research and design activities of twenty years before, and there is no direct evidence that Pansky had any direct contact with him while in Rome.

The other Fellow to propose an engineering project to the Academy was Wayne Taylor (’60–’62). Like Pansky, he mentioned Pier Luigi Nervi in his statement, and expressed an interest in studying his concrete structures. Taylor discusses his recent research experience in this area, and his interest in the work of both Nervi and another Italian structural engineer:

> During the past three years I have been engaged in research and design as an assistant of Professor Horatio Caminos in the study of a particular system of membranal structures.…There are two outstanding engineers working in Italy on structural form through testing. One is Dr. Guido Oberti, Director of Instituto Sperimental (structural model testing) in Bergamo, Italy. The other is Pier Luigi Nervi who has built many buildings through northern Italy. I would like to study in particular the structural work in concrete of these two men.

Although Taylor mentions his interest in visiting examples of daringly engineered historic architecture, his proposal reads primarily like a scientific, as opposed to an artistic or humanistic, research project. Amazingly, while at the Academy Taylor constructed just such a concrete shell structure in the Academy’s courtyard (fig. 2.7). A number of photographs documented this large-scale construction, which makes for some of the most dramatic images from this period in the

Academy’s history. As an enormous intervention into the sacred space of the institution’s architecture, it appears in retrospect like installation art *avant la lettre* as much as rationally conceived engineering research. It is also highly consistent with prominent projects for concrete shell structures such as Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House of 1957, Eero Saarinen’s TWA Terminal, begun in 1956, Pier Luigi Nervi’s Palazzetto dello Sport in Rome of 1957.

Of the three Fellows with “fringe” proposals, the one by Bernard Steinberg (’61-63) is the most closely connected to the previously discussed “mainstream” architectural themes of history, cultural development and urbanism:

I wish to assist in the dynamic, but logical and continuous development of Man. Concentrating, as described later, on Urban Patterns and Town Centers, I would like to conduct a study of existing arts and architecture of the Past, perhaps attempting some readjustments in that process which discarded some elements and preserved and improved others for contemporary architecture. Italy has become a valuable focal point for the student of architecture, due to its varying historical influences.

However, Steinberg continues to take Pansky and Taylor’s unification of architecture and engineering to what can only be described as a cosmic scale:

Architecture has always ideally been treated as a “shell” with a dual function: protection, which still allows sympathetic communication with all the occupant’s environment. The operating efficiency of this function can be increased only after examining further the fundamental structure of our environment. One way to describe this environment is as if the architectural shell were but the innermost of many layers, before our individual skins themselves were reached. Beyond lies the shell of atmosphere around our planet; beyond this exists our solar system; finally are the outermost shells of what we have become physically aware of—our galaxy, and our universe. It is significant that the structure of the universe, and that of our bodies, retain stability only through a complex, continuous combination of motions of the particles. The most skillful logic and technology is needed to increase awareness of what lies within these, and further boundaries, and to become increasingly able to construct in harmony with the devastatingly powerful natural laws, buildings both sufficient against the ravages of nature without and sufficient in allowing necessary natural laws to function within. When such buildings have been properly mastered, it may be the architect-engineer’s task to construct cities with the same characteristics, and finally continents, mobile spaceships for living, and planetoids sufficient to operate independently and sustain human life.

Written in 1960, such an evocation of architectural design as a galactic endeavor is appropriately synchronous with the accelerating space race and the moon mission announced by President
Within a specifically architectural context, Steinberg’s approach to design is highly reminiscent of the engineering utopianism of Buckminster Fuller, whose interest in a profoundly and radically technological modernism was undergoing a contemporary renewal of interest through the writings of the British critic Reyner Banham. While appropriate to its historic moment, Steinberg’s proposal raises a much larger question, regarding not only architecture at the Academy, but the characterization of the world of postwar modern architecture in general. The notion of going to Rome in order to design “mobile spaceships for living, and planetoids sufficient to…sustain human life” constitutes a rather jarring cultural collision, more surprising than the construction of a large concrete dome on its grounds. It introduces a world of architectural thinking that had become a new disciplinary avant-garde, resisting the contemporary versions of modern architecture that had become established as the officially sanctioned style in the U.S. and much of Europe, inculcated at the top design schools, published in the major journals, practiced by the most successful firms. In the work of Banham, especially, we see a determination to rekindle the old fires of the radical revolution, to recapture the faith in technology, progress, and liberation from tradition that had faded in the postwar writings of Giedion, whose writings increasingly came to focus on the theme of primeval origins as the source of meaning in architecture in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the late 1940s, the American Academy in Rome had embraced the modern architecture which had been revolutionary in the 1920s and 1930s. Through the 1950s and early 1960s, graduates from top modernist programs were seeking, and earning, its Rome Prize fellowships, and had

182 Steinberg’s statement is dated December 27, 1960.
183 See Reyner Banham’s Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960).
formulated a newly defined, more explicit set of reasons why architects should go to Italy, ones that were relevant to issues central to postwar practice and sometimes posed challenges to what was seen as a new flavor of architectural orthodoxy. But this question of orthodox doctrine and critical challenge relates to a broader, more fundamental, and more difficult question: had the Academy, in becoming a “modernist” cultural institution, truly altered its core mission, and entered into a genuinely progressive artistic movement? Or was this event one symbolically significant part of the transformation of a previously revolutionary ideology into a new academicism, *sans* volutes?

These questions require an assessment of whether and how modern architecture’s institutional success altered its essential nature as an aesthetic movement, a broad question indeed. A specific avenue into this problem is an assessment of the Academy’s relationship to the world of postwar architectural practice. The Rome Prize Fellows were young, usually recent graduates with at most a few years of professional practice. They were primarily consumers of architectural ideas seeking a way into the discipline, and their careers would ultimately follow a broad range of trajectories and provide varying degrees of success. Their identities primarily clarify which individuals and ideas were considered promising for fellowships and long-term affiliation. But for the Academy to claim genuine, immediate legitimacy as an architectural institution required association with *already* famous architects—as its pivotal and influential invitation to George Howe established. Who else, among the “big names” in postwar architecture, did the Academy choose, and who chose to reciprocate its interest? To what extent did affiliation with Rome and the Academy reflect these architects’ professional interests or affect their creative work? Can this interaction be characterized in any way as “progressive” or “conservative”? A consideration of these questions in the next chapter will at least begin to clarify how to understand the ideological position of architecture at the American Academy with respect to the discipline at large.
Illustrations: Chapter 2

Fig. 2.1: Robert Venturi, “Chapel for Episcopal Academy,” MFA Thesis Project, Princeton, 1950 [Brownlee et al., Out of the Ordinary]

Fig. 2.2: Jean Labatut with students at Fontainebleau, France, 19 [Labatut Papers, Princeton]
Fig. 2.3: Lt. Charles Wiley, “Designs for Postwar Living” [California Arts and Architecture 61 (March 1944)]
Fig. 2.4: Alfred H. Barr, Philip Johnson, and Margaret Scolari Barr, Cortona, Italy, 1932 [S. Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr*]

Fig. 2.5: Tatlin, “Monument to the Third International” and Borromini, S. Ivo alla Sapienza [S. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*]
Fig. 2.6: Guido Fiorini Skyscraper designs, 1928 and 1930 [Godoli, *Il Futurismo*]

Fig. 2.7: Experimental concrete shell structure by Wayne Taylor, 1962 [AAR Archives]
Chapter 3: The Academy and the Profession

Rome in New York

In 1960, *Look* magazine published a photograph by Arnold Newman in which nine men tower over a large-scale exhibition model of the ongoing project for Lincoln Center in New York City (fig. 3.1).¹ The low angle from which the photo was taken makes these men appear larger than life, and the accompanying text amplifies them further:

To provide a matchless showcase for the performing arts in America, the planners of “Culture City” have matched the talents of some of this country’s leading impresarios and artists with the talents of some of our most famous architects and designers.

The men in the photograph are duly identified as the planners and “most famous architects and designers” responsible for realizing the project. At bottom center, head and shoulders poking up through the proposed piazza, is Lincoln Center President John D. Rockefeller III, scion of a family that had already endowed New York with other “cities within the city” at Rockefeller Center and the United Nations.² Rockefeller is surrounded by the architects of each of Lincoln Center’s constituent buildings: Wallace K. Harrison designed the Metropolitan Opera House (completed in 1966) and here called the project’s “chief architect”; his partner Max Abramovitz designed Philharmonic Hall (completed in 1962, now Avery Fischer Hall), and Philip Johnson designed the New York State Theater (completed 1964), the three buildings visible in the photograph. Gordon Bunshaft and Edward Mathews of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) were originally hired to design a combined public library branch and museum, and Eero Saarinen and stage designer Jo Mielziner were engaged

¹ “Top designers are pooling their talents for Lincoln Center,” *Look* 24 (Jan. 19, 1960): 42.
² The site of the U.N. complex was donated by the Rockefellers; for a compilation of this family’s architectural patronage in New York City, see Henry Hope Reed, *Rockefeller New York: A Tour by Henry Hope Reed* (New York: Greensward Foundation, Inc., 1988).
to design the Repertory Theater. These two projects were later combined into one structure, now the Vivian Beaumont Theater (completed 1965), for which they had collective responsibility until Saarinen’s death in September 1961. Pietro Belluschi, standing alone at far right, would design the Juilliard School, the last of the complex’s original structures to be completed in 1969.

This photograph, with its striking grouping of some of the top architects of the day, is one of a pair of related images for the article. Both combine groups of impressive cultural personages with architectural models of Lincoln Center, but the other photograph, also by Newman, is given greater importance through its greater size and by appearing first in the *Look* article (fig. 3.2). Spanning two pages, it shows figures standing on a rooftop clustered around a different project model, a less up-to-date but more inclusive image of Lincoln Center that shows all six of the complex’s planned structures at a smaller scale.

The eleven figures are the “leading impresarios and artists,” such as choreographer Martha Graham and composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein, along with five male administrators of the Center’s participating institutions, mentioned in the text as a pendant to the “most famous architects and designers.” They stand on the roof of one the structures which will be demolished to make way for “Culture City,” against a prominent backdrop of similar tenement buildings. This predominantly African-American neighborhood, just north of Hell’s Kitchen, had been described as “the worst slum in New York” by Robert Moses, head of the

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3 See “New U.S. capital for the performing arts: “Culture City,” *Look* 24 (Jan. 19, 1960), p. 40-41. The larger model in the architects’ photograph was likely the same one put on display at Pennsylvania Station two months later, described as ten by eleven feet: see “Arts Center Model Unveiled by Mayor,” *New York Times* (March 22, 1960): 34. The model on pp. 40-41 is earlier, reflecting the design as of approximately 1959. A third major model, much closer to the final building designs, was unveiled over a year later; see “Donors to View New, Complete Lincoln Center Model,” *New York Times* (May 12, 1961): 19.

4 They also include prima ballerina Alicia Markova, actress Julie Harris, and an unnamed Juilliard student holding violin case and music beneath the “Young American soprano Lucine Amara” (the only figure whose nationality is specified).
Mayor’s Slum Clearance Committee and author of the plan to use Culture City to combat “urban rot.”

By any measure, Lincoln Center was an ambitious project. Replacing fourteen acres of densely inhabited residences with a campus for some of the most prominent cultural institutions in not just New York City, but the nation as a whole, was a complex legal, fiscal, and logistical order. Furthermore, within the context of the Cold War, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union vied militarily, scientifically, and culturally to maintain and increase their respective “spheres of influence” around the globe, far more was at stake in the performing arts of ballet, opera, and classical music than satisfied audiences, critics, and patrons. Like Olympic athletics, these fields had become public arenas for substantiating the two nations’ competing claims to global supremacy. The Look article summarizes Lincoln Center’s mission as follows:

The modern design of the Center is intended to free professional artists from the frustrations of limited facilities and to provide students of the performing arts with a unique educational environment….When finished, Lincoln Center will offer a remarkable range of educational, musical and theatrical activities to the some three million people who are expected to visit it each year. Millions more will enjoy these performances on radio and television. Their variety and artistic excellence will make the Center a symbol of America’s cultural maturity.

Thus, Culture City had the task of symbolically proclaiming an American commitment to the arts, a “cultural Sputnik” of sorts. References to freedom, public access, and “cultural maturity” in 1960 were highly political. Lincoln Center was meant to help counter the charge that the U.S. was a soulless capitalist engine of consumer products and unequally distributed resources by projecting a nation which shared and continued the highest traditions of European thought and creativity, and was arguably the rightful heir to the Western cultural tradition. As Wesley Janz has observed, “the production of Lincoln Center was to communicate clearly the message that postwar America

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deserved placement in the pantheon of great civilizations.” The article proudly announces its $100 million budget, underscoring the national prosperity enabling such a project and showing America’s priorities went beyond TV dinners and missiles. The audience for this proclamation was both domestic and global: Lincoln Center was financed through both local government expenditures and private donations, and was aggressively promoted in New York to sustain political support and fundraising. Internationally, it addressed not just the U.S.S.R., but the many powerful democracies of Western Europe and Latin America with unstable internal balances of power between Communist, Socialist, and more right-wing (and typically more pro-American) political parties.

This was a heavy ideological burden to lay on any architectural project. Although by most measures Lincoln Center’s eventual success in symbolizing the cultural potential of Western democracy was only partial, at best, this was not for lack of effort. Its organizers chose an approach similar to that used a decade earlier for a project of even greater symbolic weight: the United Nations Headquarters (1947-53), just across town. In both instances, the initial design process was given over to a team of famous practitioners. The U.N. team consisted of international architects prominently associated with the modern movement, still in transition from avant-garde to professional establishment in 1947. Lincoln Center also brought in a group of star architects known for their modern works, but by 1955 this made them mainstream, not vanguard.

As a group, they were also chosen for two additional characteristics: all were American citizens, and all were deemed capable of cooperating with the sort of conservative cultural

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7 The same day that President Eisenhower broke ground at Lincoln Center (May 14, 1959), he announced that the government would spend the same amount—$100 million dollars—on an electron linear accelerator. See Wesley Janz, “Theaters of Power,” p. 232.
institutions that would be housed in the new “Culture City” campus. Their collective credentials must have seemed worthy of the high expectations placed upon the project. The New York-based firm of Harrison and Abramovitz had supervised construction of the U.N., and Harrison had been part of the team responsible for the city’s esteemed and popular Rockefeller Center complex in the 1930s. Philip Johnson had successfully transitioned from his early curatorial and critical career to architectural practice, building his own pseudo-Miesian Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut (1946-1949) and working with Mies himself on the Seagram Building (1955-58). Gordon Bunshaft was SOM’s star designer of the 1950s after the construction of Lever House (1951-52) and the Manufacturers’ Hanover Trust Headquarters (1951-54). Eero Saarinen had demonstrated both a mastery of orthodox International Style modernism at the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan (1948-56), and a boldly sculptural imagination in the arch of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial for St. Louis (designed 1947-48, built 1963-65) and airport terminals for TWA in New York (1956-62) and Dulles outside Washington, D.C. (1958-63). Pietro Belluschi was less publicly prominent than these other figures in 1960, but was well known as a northwestern regionalist modernist, and had made a major contribution to the development of the ubiquitous postwar sealed glass skyscraper through his pioneering Equitable Building (1944-47) in Portland, Oregon. He had since risen to the deanship of MIT’s School of Architecture and become a major player in two governmental organizations involved with architecture. Both Harrison and Saarinen had appeared on the cover of Time magazine, a measure of their popular recognition beyond the world of architecture.

As Janz notes, “these architectural heroes had already proved their ability to

9 The initial Architects’ Advisory Panel included Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and Swedish architect Sven Markelius who were dropped out of a desire to make the project “All-American.” Marcel Breuer, a naturalized citizen, was deemed “too rigid in his opinions.” See Janz, “Theaters of Power,” p. 237.
10 Harrison’s professional persona can be seen as analogous to that of Daniel H. Burnham (“Make no little plans”) a half-century before, namely that of managing large-scale projects executed by large teams of professionals.
12 Harrison’s Time cover story was published on September 22, 1951; Saarinen’s appeared on July 2, 1956.
express a modernist language of power, a language in the process of embracing America’s corporate elite.”

Yet, despite years of enthusiastic promotion (including a Madison Avenue-produced advertising campaign) and an all-star design team, the architecture of both the individual buildings and the complex as a whole was far from critically successful. Some of these shortcomings reflect the difficult demands of negotiations with institutionally complex clients with conflicting interests. But Lincoln Center’s greatest perceived shortcoming was its aesthetic hybridity: the architects had decided to unify their individually-designed buildings by conceiving them as classical structures expressed in a modern vocabulary. Unlike the Court of Honor for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, where unapologetically literal Beaux-Arts classicism unified the White City’s diverse structures, the outcome of this attempt to bridge the expectations of both conservative donors and a progressive professional ideology generally failed to please the constituencies for either style.

The site plan’s arrangement of the buildings into an inward-facing formal plaza also invites comparisons to historic models. Lincoln Center’s designers most frequently mentioned the Piazza San Marco in Venice as an urban model. Its elevated array of white temples to culture also earned it comparisons to Periclean Athens and the title of “cultural Acropolis.” Yet on the whole, its final design is arguably closer to Rome. Unlike San Marco’s continuous, arcaded enclosing walls or the studied irregularity of the Athenian Acropolis, Lincoln Center’s organizational parti places three unconnected major buildings in a symmetrical U-shape. Harrison’s biographer dismisses Lincoln Center’s basic arrangement of “neoclassical buildings around a central plaza” as only “distantly

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14 For the mixed critical reception of Lincoln Center’s individual buildings and total impact, see the discussion in Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, New York 1960, pp. 677-717.
15 Newhouse, Harrison, p. 190.
17 Philip Johnson did propose a Venetian-sounding continuous, unifying arcade around the main plaza, but this was rejected.
related to the classical scheme of Michelangelo’s Campidoglio in Rome,” but the connection to the city’s most revered civic center is formally compelling. While the static geometry of the circle in a square lacks the dramatic tension of Michelangelo’s oval within a trapezoid, Max Abramovitz, Harrison’s partner, affirmed decades later that the Campidoglio was indeed the model for its site design.

The short ascent up the steps from Columbus Avenue to Lincoln Center’s plaza is far less dramatic than the Cordonata stair, but the Opera House’s greater height and arcaded façade provides a clear visual culmination, as does the Palazzo dei Senatori. While the simpler, more box-like forms of the State Theater and Philharmonic Hall do not mirror each other like the Palazzo dei Conservatori and the Palazzo Nuovo, the effect of their balanced forms remains highly reminiscent of Michelangelo’s symmetrical design. Occupying Marcus Aurelius’ central position is a black granite, circular fountain, from which radiates Philip Johnson’s paving pattern, easily read as a circular simplification of Michelangelo’s interwoven ellipses. The Campidoglio’s paving was installed under Mussolini’s regime only in 1940, the last part of Michelangelo’s design to be executed—an event from recent memory for all of Lincoln Center’s architects.

This architectural imbrication of ancient, papal, and Fascist eras problematizes Roman citations in the postwar decades. The Campidoglio was the model for a number of similarly U-shaped arrangements under Mussolini, such as the classicizing modern palazzi framing the circular, newly “liberated” Mausoleum of Augustus (1937-40; fig. 3.3). By mid-century, links to Roman history were intrinsically double- (if not triple-) coded: the choice to unify Lincoln Center’s buildings

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18 Newhouse, Harrison, p. 235.
19 The recorded oral history in which Abramovitz states this is no longer audible, but a typed transcript summarizing its contents states that “the Campidoglio is source” for Lincoln Center’s layout. See “Max Abramovitz interviewed by George M. Goodwin, March 31 and May 6 1993,” Max Abramovitz Papers, Department of Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, New York (hereafter “Avery Archives”).
20 On the remaking of the site around the Mausoleum of Augustus, see Spiro Kostof, “The Emperor and the Duce: The Planning of the Piazzale Augusto Imperatore in Rome,” in H. A. Millon and L. Nochlin, eds., Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978). Libera & De Renzi’s post office was even compared to the Campidoglio, with its “cordonata” stair.
by cladding them in travertine, Rome’s distinctive local limestone, recalls both Michelangelo’s giant-order pilasters on the Campidoglio, and Guerini, Romano and La Padula’s Palazzo della Civiltà Romana of 1938-43 (fig. 3.4).21 Ghosts of Rome haunt the rooftop photograph in Look, with its celebration of a coming project dedicated to civic order and high culture replacing substandard housing through “urban hygiene.” Much like the Eternal City’s multiple renewals under millennia of emperors, popes, kings, and Il Duce, Lincoln Center cavalierly displaced thousands of powerless citizens to further an urban elite’s symbolic agenda.22

Years of intense promotion and fundraising had built and maintained political support for Lincoln Center, but the project’s ideological and stylistic tensions were noted by a few observers. In 1964, Ilse Meissner Reese wrote that the exterior of Johnson’s State Theater “comes dangerously close to the pretentious Italian monumentality of the Mussolini era.”23 Two years later, Ebba Anderson lamented that the “humanistic potential” of the site design and classical vocabulary “could have produced a beautiful, dignified, and noble environment,” but that ultimately they did not. She instead positions Lincoln Center, with its “overbearing, pompous character” on classicism’s “dark side:”

Since Lincoln Center’s design was not determined by a humanistic attitude towards artistic productions, rather by quasi-religious considerations involving the politics of prestige and public image and, perforce, a concept of power hostile to democratic uses, the classical form inevitably assumed a fascist character.24

Anderson attributes its aesthetic failures to ideologically flawed motives and a non-participatory design process, rather than intrinsic to the classical model itself. Another thoughtful observer had lamented the center’s Fascist aesthetics a year earlier. In 1965, architectural historian Henry Millon

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21 Travertine was also one of Mies van der Rohe’s favorite materials, giving it modernist credentials as well.
22 The number of people displaced was reported to be 1647 families, one-third of whom went to “unknown” destinations. Housing relocation advocates estimated the number at 7000 families. See Janz, “Theaters of Power,” pp. 235-6.
23 Ilse M. Reese, John M. Dixon, and James T. Burns, “Critical Trialogue on Johnson’s Lincoln Center Theater,” Progressive Architecture 45 (May 1964): 58-59. Reese is certainly the same Ilse Meissner listed as “honorable mention and first alternate” for the Rome Prize in 1947 (see discussion and n. 68 below).
noted “the superficial resemblances of exterior forms of loggias, arcades, arches, obvious plan arrangement, and so forth, between Lincoln Center and Mussolini’s EUR,” finding Culture City a “depressing sight.”

A scholar of both Renaissance and recent Italian architecture, Millon was well-positioned to see and ponder the re-use of these traditions for contemporary purposes. He knew the city’s architecture from both eras well from his time in Rome as a fellow in Art History at the American Academy in 1958-60, where he would return as a resident scholar in 1966. Yet Millon’s Academy associations were shared in common with most of the Lincoln Center architects he criticized. Harrison was an Academy Trustee from 1959-64; Abramovitz served as architect in residence in 1961, as did Belluschi in 1954. Bunshaft was a Rome Prize juror for 1958 and 1959, and Eero Saarinen visited the Academy in the autumn of 1951. Philip Johnson, besides his behind-the-scenes coordination of George Howe’s residency, also had two employees win Rome Prizes in the 1950s, and would himself become a trustee in 1973. While absent from the Look photo, even the bulldozer of urban renewal who made Lincoln Center possible, New York City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, was an official guest at the Academy in the early 1960s.

Thus the group of prominent architects seen in Newman’s photograph collectively authored a symbolically charged cultural project with clear formal allusions and physical connections to Rome’s fabric and history during the same period when most of them were involved with the Academy. Despite their generally well-documented careers, little or no attention has been devoted to

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27 In a letter to the Academy President, Director Roberts writes that “Mr. Saarinen has now gone in his car for a two week tour of the hill towns and the cities in the Lombard plain, taking the Barringers with him.” Letter, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 24 October 1951, 5759:1016, AAR Records, AAA.

28 Moses, s.v., in Kohl et al., Centennial Directory.
their individual or collective involvement with the Academy, the single most important U.S. cultural institution in Rome. Nor have Lincoln Center’s obvious rhetorical echoes of the city’s precedents ever received serious scrutiny. These architects’ connections to an institution dedicated to the ongoing relevance of Rome casts a new light on the Newman photograph, projects like Lincoln Center, and poses a crucial question: what was the Academy’s relationship to U.S. architecture’s professional establishment from 1947-1966?

My first chapter demonstrated how the Academy deliberately reoriented its architectural position vis à vis the internal debates between the profession’s “modernists” and “traditionalists” of the late 1940s. The formerly tradition-bound institution changed its policies, selected a new director, and used public statements and nominations to announce its realignment with the discipline’s new, more modern direction, while also seeking to not alienate its established supporters and alumni. In the previous chapter, I discussed the educational backgrounds and interests of the young architects who sought and won fellowships to the American Academy in Rome, the ways in which they expected the city to further their development as architects, and their ideas’ relevance to current disciplinary issues. But the fellows were not the only architects, nor were they (at the time) the most prominent ones, involved with the Academy during the postwar decades. This chapter will consider another group: the senior, professionally established figures who chose to participate in this organization in a number of ways, for a number of reasons. Through them, we can trace its alignment with several of the many issues, factions, styles and movements that divided and preoccupied their discipline. The photograph from *Look* invites consideration of these figures not only individually, but as a group. Exploring how those producing projects like Lincoln Center interpreted and valued Rome introduces a number of unresolved issues about how modern architecture as practiced at mid-century confronted history, Cold War ideology, and its own increasing power.
Howe, Kahn, and the Residency Program

The Academy was both the organization that brought young architects to Rome as Fellows, and a physical and social home base to anchor and frame their experiences. For many Rome Prize winners, their fellowship would begin decades of continued involvement with the institution. Its epicenter was the McKim, Mead and White-designed Main Building on the Janiculum (1911-1914), heart of the small campus of adjacent Academy properties, home to its library, dining hall, and housing and studios for unmarried fellows (fig. 3.5).29 There they would join a community of scholars and artists in their own and other disciplines, composed of fellows, residents, and visitors, who voluntarily shared meals, local field trips, and often more extended travels (fig. 3.6).

Given the Academy’s social dimension, the residency program inaugurated in 1947 as an alternative to a fixed fine arts “faculty” was of great importance. A guaranteed opportunity to interact closely and informally with an established figure in one’s own field, even for a relatively short period of time, would have greatly enhanced the luster of the Rome Prize. A letter from architect Frederic Coolidge, one of the first three postwar architecture fellows, accepts the Academy’s Rome Prize offer while seeking explicit confirmation that George Howe will be there in residence.30 Because no statement of purpose from Coolidge survives, the only known reason for his

29 This structure is only one of the Academy’s complex of properties, and houses living quarters for fellows, the Academy’s library, and dining hall (newly open to women, as noted in chapter one). Married fellows with children were housed in nearby apartments, and the Academy’s postwar directors resided in the nearby Villa Aurelia.
30 Coolidge writes, “Would you be kind enough to tell me whether George Howe is going to be in Rome next winter, and if so, what is his address here? I should like to write him about next winter.” Letter, Frederic S. Coolidge to Mary T. Williams, 28 May 1947; Fellows Files: Coolidge, Frederic S., 1947-1948; AAR Archives. A similar statement is found in Williams’ letter of invitation to Louis Kahn: “Mr. George Howe will be in residence simply to give criticism and technical advice when requested.” Mary T. Williams to Louis I. Kahn, 27 March 1947, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, hereafter cited as “Kahn Collection, AAUP”.
interest in the Academy is that this young GSD graduate valued the prospect of proximity to one of the most prominent modern American architects of the 1940s.31

Many of the Academy’s young Rome Prize architects had already enjoyed connections with important figures in their discipline, as professors or employers whose letters of recommendation supported their fellowship applications. SOM had six employees win Rome Prizes, as did the far smaller firm of Eero Saarinen.32 Four had worked for Harrison and Abramovitz, and two each for Philip Johnson and Pietro Belluschi.33 Employment with (and recommendations from) top modern architects of the postwar years was a commonly shared characteristic among the fellows. These employers in particular were also associated with the Academy directly. Of course, young interns in architectural firms worked with famous principals to greatly varying degrees: in larger, more corporate-structured environments (like SOM or Harrison and Abramovitz), they might have had little or no contact, while smaller offices could provide a much closer, more personal acquaintance. Even so, the Academy offered a unique chance to eat, converse, and travel for several weeks with an established, well-known figure. This would be professionally advantageous in any field, but especially in one like architecture, so dependent on the intangibles of taste and aesthetic creativity.

The Academy’s Rome Prize brochure for 1954-55 explicitly used its residency program as a selling point, stating that “to help and advise the architects in their study and travel, the Academy invites a prominent architect to be in residence for part of each year.”34 Association with top-name

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31 It is reasonable to assume that like Wiley and Kahn, also Rome Prize applicants for 1947-48, Coolidge would have been asked to provide a statement of purpose.
32 The former SOM employees were Wiley, Byrd, Maule, Pansky, Stifter, and Perry. Saarinen’s were Platner, Venturi, Jacob, Stifter (who also worked at SOM), and Mittelstadt.
33 Jova, Amisano, MacFayden and Brickbauer, had all worked for Harrison & Abramovitz; Brickbauer and Jarrett worked for Johnson, and Peterson and Pederson for Belluschi. Other prominent employers of Rome Prize architects included MIT Professor Carl Koch (3), Antonin Raymond (3), TAC (2), Paul Rudolph (2) Minoru Yamasaki (2), Ketchum, Gina & Sharp (2), George Nelson (1), John Johansen (1), and Perkins & Will (1).
architects helped attract high-quality applicants and was a crucial means of bolstering the image of the disciplinary currency which the Academy pursued since 1947. However, finding prominent professionals of national reputation who were both willing and able to suspend practice and come to Rome, even for relatively limited periods, presented obvious challenges. As the postwar recovery inaugurated one of the country’s largest building booms, the most desirable architects for the Academy’s purposes were enjoying what was, for many, the greatest period of professional opportunity they had yet experienced.

Within this context, George Howe was an even more propitious resident than he was shown to be in chapter one. At the time of his invitation to the Academy in March 1947 he had only one other professional commitment: his recent appointment as Professional Adviser for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial design competition, whose jury ultimately selected Eero Saarinen’s famous Gateway Arch for St. Louis (fig. 3.7). Yet even coordinating the Academy’s invitation with this one job would prove challenging. Due in part to Howe’s evolving understanding of the competition schedule, it required several months of extensive correspondence between Howe and Laurance Roberts to clarify the terms and period of his residency. The Academy’s academic year began officially on October 1, and the initial agreement was for Howe to arrive in Rome soon thereafter and stay for four months. He was offered traveling expenses plus a (quite generous) $2000 stipend for this period. However, Howe found that he could not leave St. Louis until early November, and would need to return in early February, which meant either a three-month residency

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35 See Stern, Howe, p. 206-207, and Hélène Lipstadt, “The Gateway Arch,” in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, eds., Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). Howe’s lack of activity was not entirely atypical: because the U.S. economy took several years to transition from wartime controls and limits to private, consumer-based production, the postwar building boom in the U.S. would only really begin to take off in the early 1950s.

36 Letters dated 4 March 1947 and 17 March 1947, L. Roberts to G. Howe, George Howe Papers, Avery Archives.

or dividing his four-month stay into two blocks of time. Both Roberts and Howe hoped to arrange for a second, longer residency for 1948-49: Roberts initial letter states “I am hoping very much that the Academy might count on your services for a longer time next year,” and Howe later seeks to clarify the financial terms of this offer and state his availability to be in Rome for a full year with correspondingly greater support. While Roberts clearly hoped to receive authorization for this “enlarged commitment,” he later informed Howe that the Academy intended for residencies to be limited to four months per year. The final agreement was that Howe would come March 1, when his work in St. Louis was entirely completed, and would stay until July 1. Howe finally sailed for Naples on March 16, 1948.

This interchange clarifies that while Roberts hoped to retain Howe as a more permanent fixture at the Academy, the Board in New York did not support this proposal financially. They did agree later to provide him with a second four-month residency on similar terms as the first, beginning in October of 1948. However, it appears that Howe remained at the Academy for far longer than the eight months for which he was paid to be there. While his official designation as the Academy’s architect in residence for the three academic years from “1947-1950” could suggest a

38 Letters, G. Howe to L. Roberts, 21 March and 16 April 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
40 Apparently, the Trustees vetoed Roberts’ request to authorize more money to keep Howe in Rome for a longer period; Letter, L. Roberts to G. Howe, 1 May 1947, 5798:1485, AAR Papers, AAA. See also Howe’s letters of 16 April and 9 May, and 10 June 1947 and Roberts’ letter of 20 May 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives. These terms appear quite generous: adjusted for inflation, $2000 in 1948 is over $18,000 in 2008 dollars.
42 Letter dated 5 February 1948, Mary T. Williams to G. Howe, and 10 February 1948, G. Howe to M. T. Williams, Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
43 Roberts states that “it was impossible for me to reopen the question of your coming as resident architect for any period other than the original one of 4 months at $2000” and advises Howe that due to “the present temper of the Board it would be most unwise to add any further complication at the resent moment.” Letter, Roberts to Howe, 20 May 1947, Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
44 Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 7 June 1948, 5759:938-39, AAR Records, AAA.
three-year period in Rome, Howe officially took up his position at Yale on January 1 of 1950, and must have returned to the U.S. by December of 1949. 45 Howe's biographer, Robert A. M. Stern, states that he made "occasional return trips" to the U.S. during the overall period of his residency, but does not specify dates or occasions. 46 The only other event Stern relates from this twenty-one month period (March 1948-December 1949) is that Howe divorced his wife of forty-one years, Maritje Jessup Patterson, in "late 1948," for which he would have certainly had to return to the U.S. 47 A letter by Roberts from 15 November 1948 mentions that he and "George" (certainly Howe) had just led a group of nine Fellows to explore central Italian hill towns for a week, and were soon to travel to Naples, placing him in Italy during that month. 48 Letters to his daughter place him back in Rome by late January or early February of 1949, and she cites further communications from Italy through November of 1949. 49

Howe's divorce and his extended stay at the Academy were thus apparently connected: in addition to describing her father's hyperbolic accounts of his leisurely semi-retirement, West writes that Howe "threatened" to get re-married while in Rome in the summer of 1949. 50 In fact, two

45 Howe's entry in Kohl, et al., Centennial Directory, lists him as "RAAR Architecture 47-50." Stern also mistakenly places him in Rome in May 1947, almost a year before his actual arrival, stating that he "remained there for more than two years." He is certainly basing this upon Helen Howe West's citation of a cable sent to the Academy's Mary T. Williams on May 16 of 1947, in which Howe writes: "Shall arrive by plane much earlier than previously advised. Will call you on arrival." See her book George Howe: Architect (Philadelphia: William Nunn, 1973), p. 58. But Williams worked at the Academy's headquarters in New York, not in Rome. A letter to Roberts from Howe of 20 May 1947 is written from St. Louis on Jefferson National Expansion Memorial letterhead, and is still seeking to clarify the terms of a distant future residency. Thus, the extant archival documentation places his arrival in Rome ten months later than Stern claims. See Robert A. M. Stern, George Howe: Towards a Modern American Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 210. 46 Stern, Howe, p. 210. 47 West, Howe, p. 55. 48 Letter, Roberts to J.K. Smith, 15 November 1948, 5759:957, AAR Records, AAA. James Lamantia, who began his architecture fellowship in the fall of 1948, recalls that both Howe and Laurence Roberts met him and the other fellows when they arrived in Naples in September of 1948. Interview with author, 26 May 2006. 49 Howe's 17 February 1949 letter to West suggests that it was written soon after his return voyage to Rome. West cites other communications from her father from July 1949, 28 August 1949, and 31 October 1949. West, Howe, pp. 58-59. 50 Howe's letters to his daughter describe himself enjoying authentically "Roman," decadently epicurean leisure. On his remarriage, West cites a cable to herself from July 1949 and a letter to a Mrs. Farrow dated 28 August 1949 in West, Howe, pp. 58-59. While apparently one of the most engrossing, since it led to his divorce from a very accommodating wife, this was hardly Howe's first affair. A letter to Stern by Howe's client and longtime friend William Stix Wasserman mentions another extramarital relationship Howe had during the war years with a woman who waited several years for
additional documents from the archives of another member of the Academy community help pin down the visit of Howe’s return to the U.S., and also imply the identity of his intended new spouse. Several photographs by Isabel Roberts show Howe with Concetta Scaravaglione, an Academy Fellow in sculpture from 1947-1950 (fig. 3.8). Scaravaglione’s papers also contain three items containing affectionate notes from a “G.H.,” Howe’s customary signature. Two of these are brief cablegrams, one undated from New York, another from Milan on 4 September 1948, and one is a handwritten note from Washington, D.C. dated December 12, 1948. Thus, he made at least one return trip to the U.S. in December and could have been in Italy from late March through November 1948 and February through December 1949, a total of eighteen or nineteen months. Howe’s invitation to Yale came in August of 1949, just as he was shocking those at home by announcing his intended second marriage. It can only be conjectured whether or not the Yale offer affected his announced marriage plans, which were never carried out.

While Howe had initially responded to the Yale offer by coyly stating that he had planned to remain in Italy to finish a book, there is no evidence that he worked on any such project in Rome.
He did, however, work on one major architectural project during his period at the Academy.

Surviving photographs from his archive show a model for a proposed U.S. Consulate Building in Naples, a project that also helped keep Howe in Italy (fig. 3.9). In his February 1949 letter to his daughter, Howe describes himself as “acting director of the Academy” while Roberts was in the U.S., and “designing Naples Consulate.” His August letter complains that his government clients “have to pay me SOME DAY” for this work, and the last letter from late October states

The drain [financial] will soon be over, but the Academy stopped paying some months ago and I’ve been here on my own, because of the Naples job, for which Uncle Sam has not yet paid me.

Howe’s two paid four-month residencies were for April-July of 1948, and October-January of 1948-49. Since his work on the Naples project had already begun in February, Howe likely hoped that payment for this project would support him during a longer stay at the Academy, where Roberts apparently made him welcome to remain. Thus, his third “year” of residency, the fall of the 1949-50 academic year, was more an informal designation than an officially subsidized arrangement.

One other known aspect of Howe’s residency is that he had hoped from the outset to be joined there by Louis Kahn, with whom he had practiced from 1941-43, immediately before entering the Federal Government’s wartime building bureaucracy. Kahn’s stay at the Academy would be one of the most significant and celebrated of the postwar era. Howe is often credited with arranging

unfinished manuscript entitled “Of Houses and Human Bondage. Reflections on Modern Architecture,” dated to approximately 1945, may be a project he intended to complete (but did not) while in Rome; see Stern, Howe, p. 209, and the list of Howe’s known writings for 1945-1955, pp. 257-259.

55 Analysis of this project’s design and a discussion of its relation to other overseas diplomatic architecture will be presented below.
56 West, Howe, p. 59.
57 The August letter also announces Howe’s intentions to travel to England, the Netherlands, and Egypt in October. See West, Howe, p. 58. Although Stern dates the model photographs to 1947, it appears much more likely that it dates to 1949, when Howe first discusses this project in cited letters.
for it to take place, although not always very accurately.\textsuperscript{59} Howe did begin trying to get Kahn to the Academy very soon after agreeing to go himself.\textsuperscript{60} At the end of March, just a few weeks after Howe’s invitation, Howe, Mary Williams, and Philip Johnson all wrote to Kahn urging him to apply for the Rome Prize. Williams wrote that “Mr. Philip Johnson has suggested your name to us as one who might possibly be interested in a Prix de Rome Fellowship,” and describes the newly unstructured Rome Prize: “As you may know, the Fellows at the Academy work absolutely on their own, and are urged to travel in Europe.”\textsuperscript{61} Philip Johnson wrote from MoMA that same day:

George [Howe] said that you might like to go to Rome next winter. I am having a notice sent to you directly from the Academy in case they neglect to get in touch with you yourselves.

They want examples of your work sent to them before the eighteenth of April. Can you assemble photographs and sketches for them some time soon?...

I feel quite sure that this can be arranged and would be delighted to recommend you. It rather looks as if I would be in Rome some time next winter and we could have fun.\textsuperscript{62}

The least reverent is Howe, who wrote four days later: “I enclose the dope about the American Academy in Rome. I think you have this already, but I follow up in order to urge you to consider the idea seriously.”\textsuperscript{63} After another ten days, he not only encourages Kahn to persist, but like Johnson, claims he can guarantee a positive outcome: “I do think we can have fun together in Rome and as I am a member of the Jury of Selection, I ought to be able to cook up this dish to our mutual satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{64}

Eugene Johnson suggests that Philip Johnson contacted Williams at Howe’s behest, since Howe would serve on the Rome Prize jury and his direct intervention “would have been

\textsuperscript{59} For instance, Kahn is sometimes referred to erroneously as a Fellow, which he was not. The detailed account I present here is intended to clarify exactly what can be known from all surviving documentation.

\textsuperscript{60} Their letters refer to an intended “shared project,” which Johnson believes involved a fusion of historical form and modernist “free space,” a subject presented by Howe in a 1948 talk. See “Sketching Abroad,” p. 74.

\textsuperscript{61} Letter, Mary T. Williams to Louis I. Kahn, 27 March 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.

\textsuperscript{62} Letter, Philip C. Johnson to Louis I. Kahn, 27 March 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.

\textsuperscript{63} Letter, George Howe to Louis Kahn, 31 March 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.

\textsuperscript{64} Letter, George Howe to Louis Kahn, 10 April 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
However, since Johnson had already served as matchmaker between the Academy and Howe, the possibility of Howe and Kahn coming to the Academy at the same time may have been part of their discussions from the outset. Finding suitable applicants for the Rome Prize during its first postwar start-up year was apparently not easy: in a mid-April letter to Roberts, Howe wrote that “I am sorry to hear the [Rome Prize] judgment has been postponed, but if there are as yet an insufficient number of submissions, it is probably as well.” A later letter from landscape architect Michael Rapuano, chair of the Academy’s Fine Arts committee, thanks Howe for his service on the Rome Prize jury, and states outright “We would be grateful if you would be good enough to keep the Academy informed of any promising young architects who might be eligible for Fellowships.” For jury members to provide names of potential fellows directly to the Academy was apparently considered appropriate at this point.

On April 24 Kahn, like other postwar Rome Prize applicants, was asked to submit a “short statement as to why you are interested in securing Rome Fellowship.” Kahn wrote back the next day:

I should consider work in Rome, away from practice, as the opportunity I have looked for to develop thoughts I have on architecture of to-day. These thoughts are about the frames and enclosures of new architectural spaces, their effect and relation to painting, sculpture and the crafts, their significance to the people and their place in the continuing evolution of traditional forms.

I believe that living in the environment of the great planning and building works of the past should stimulate better judgement [sic] in maturing these thoughts.

My ultimate aim is to develope [sic] material for an illustrated treatise of my architectural and planning ideas.

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66 Letter, Howe to Roberts, 16 April 1947, Howe Collection, Avery Archives. James Lamantia recalls that Howe, whom he knew in New York, had suggested directly that he apply for a fellowship for this first year, although he would not receive one until the following year. Interview with author, 24 May 2006.
67 Letter, Michael Rapuano to George Howe, 20 June 1940, Howe Collection, Avery Archives.
68 Telegram, American Academy in Rome to Louis I. Kahn, 24 April, 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP
69 Letter, Louis Kahn to American Academy in Rome, 25 April 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
Like the other fellows (most of whom were some twenty years his junior), Kahn’s ideas about Rome’s potential significance to his work are rather vague. He writes in very general terms about the relevance of historic architectural monuments and urban environments to contemporary practice. His focus and emphasis are on modernity: current aesthetic, sociological, and technical conditions for building (‘frames and enclosures of new architectural spaces’), the notion of ‘tradition’ as an evolving development of forms, and the theme of the interrelationship of the arts, an idea that bridged both Kahn’s Beaux-Arts education under Paul Cret at Penn (and the Academy’s original mission) and the post-Bauhaus ideology being revived by Kahn’s colleagues at Yale. His project for a treatise presenting his own design theories suggests that, at least in 1947, Kahn perceived the primary value of an Academy fellowship as a sabbatical year in which to pursue projects that might be enriched by, but were not focused upon, Rome itself.

However, despite their confidence, Howe and Johnson were not able to make good on their promise to obtain a fellowship for their friend and colleague. The Fine Arts Committee of the Academy’s Board of Trustees reviewed candidates before forwarding their applications to the jury, and Kahn’s was blocked at this point. The forty-six year old Kahn received an apologetic letter from trustee and landscape architect Michael Rapuano explaining that:

The policy of the Academy is to award its Fellowships in Architecture to promising young men at the beginning of their architectural careers rather than to older members of the profession with a background of successful and distinguished practice.

I am, therefore, sorry to advise you that in the light of this policy the Fine Arts Committee felt that your application and submissions for a Fellowship in Architecture could not be considered by the Architectural Jury at its recent meeting.

By the appointment from time to time of Architects in Residence, the Academy provides an opportunity for architects of your age and distinction to visit Rome in the capacity that Mr. Howe intends to serve this coming year.

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70 Kahn’s work of this period, such as the illustrated project that accompanies his “Monumentality” essay of 1944 shows the aesthetic primacy of the tubular frame in his imagination during the late 1940s. See the discussion by Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” pp. 72-73.

71 Letter, Michael Rapuano to Louis Kahn, 28 May 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
Johnson rightly points out that published Rome Prize announcements did not specify a maximum age or professional level for applicants. An annoyed Howe later reported that another trustee, architect William Platt, had insisted that as an “established architect of…reputation,” Kahn was ineligible for a fellowship, and should only be considered for appointment as Resident Architect.

As shown in chapter one, the Academy’s policies on the maturity of Rome Prize recipients had only just been altered by eliminating the prewar age limit of thirty. In view of the Academy’s former practices, the assertion that the Rome Prize should be preserved for artists in the early stages of their careers seems to be a reasonable and flexible adaptation of a formerly rigid and (in the postwar, G.I.-bill era) impractical limitation. Yet even this looser standard was not applied uniformly to all Fine Arts applicants in 1947. The elimination of Kahn from fellowship consideration is contemporary with the awarding of a Rome Prize in sculpture to Concetta Scaravaglione that same year. At forty-seven years old, Scaravaglione was not only one year older than Kahn, but was arguably far more well-established in her career. She had taught at Sarah Lawrence, Black Mountain and other colleges since 1925, and her work was widely published in arts journals in the 1930s and 1940s. In contrast, while Kahn was a visible figure through his involvement in numerous architectural organizations and published essays, his career as a major architect was only launched in the 1950s: as of 1947 he had built only a few minor projects (mostly wartime housing) and would only begin to teach at Yale in the fall of that year.

73 Howe states this in his letter to Laurance Roberts, 18 June 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP. Howe also concludes his letter to Kahn with “I am going to vent a few of my delicate sarcasms on the head of Mr. William Platt whom I don’t particularly like anyway.” Letter, Howe to Kahn, 10 June 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
74 Scaravaglione and Howe do not appear to have known each other before meeting in Rome at the Academy.
76 Kahn’s professional visibility was primarily due to his published essays on housing, urban planning and “monumentality,” leadership of the American Society of Architects and Planners (as vice-president in 1946 and president in 1947), and his association with the more famous Howe. See the bibliography of Kahn’s published writings.
Clearly, different eligibility standards were applied by the sculpture and architecture juries, who made their selections independently. The Fine Arts Committee may have determined that the “new” Academy, whose willingness to admit women to the School of Fine Arts was considered internally to be only slightly less revolutionary than its embrace of the architectural modernism emblematized by Howe, should award at least one Rome Prize to a female artist, regardless of whether she might be deemed an “older member of the profession with a background of successful and distinguished practice.” The possibility that Scaravaglione was selected, at least in part, to help liberalize the Academy’s public image is supported by the headline status it was given in national art journals.\textsuperscript{77} That she was already such a prolific and recognized figure in her field may even have been necessary to prove to some jurors her “worthiness” of a fellowship generally given to largely untried male artists. A policy of publicizing the eligibility of women in the fine arts is also suggested by Academy’s unusual (and unrepeatable) step of announcing in \textit{Architectural Record}, along with the Rome Prize winners in architecture, that “Miss Ilse Meissener, a graduate of Pratt Institute in 1946, was given honorable mention and named first alternate.”\textsuperscript{78} Such public declarations of its newly inclusive gender policy, as well as its more modernist aesthetic orientation, seem designed to underscore the Academy’s newly open and “inclusive” postwar image.\textsuperscript{79}


\textsuperscript{78} “Rome Fellowship,” \textit{Architectural Record} 102 (August 1947): 128. Only winners of the Rome Prize were announced in the press: no “honorable mention and first alternate” has been publicly named before or after. The first woman to win the Rome Prize in architecture would be Astra Zarina in 1960. This Ilse Meissener is almost certainly the Ilse Meissener Resse cited above for her critique of Lincoln Center’s fascist flavor; see note 19 above.

\textsuperscript{79} Such visible “inclusiveness” would receive a racial dimension in 1957, when prominent African-American novelist Ralph Ellison would receive a literature fellowship, and he and his wife Fanny would be among the first non-white members of the Academy community (Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi is recorded as a Visitor between 1943-1951). This occurred soon after the Supreme Court’s \textit{Brown vs. Board of Education} decision of 1955 outlawing racial discrimination in public education. While as a privately sustained institution the Academy was exempt, the issues of race and equality were certainly prominent at this time.
Whether or not Kahn was aware of his unequal treatment as a Rome Prize applicant, he responded enthusiastically to the suggestion that he might serve as Howe’s successor in Rome.  
Kahn was excited enough to inquire how to “apply” for this position, but Howe responded that he should allow “his friends” (i.e., Howe and Johnson) to suggest him. The same day he wrote to Kahn, Howe wrote a letter to Laurance Roberts telling him of Kahn’s exclusion from Rome Prize candidacy and Platt’s suggestion that he would make a more appropriate resident, along with his own faith that “it would be difficult to find a more stimulating personality to preside over the meditations and studies of the young men.” Eugene Johnson suggests that Howe chose to write directly to Roberts in order to circumvent an unsupportive Academy administration in New York. Whether or not this is accurate, residency “candidates” appear to have been chosen at this time in what can only be described as an informal manner.

Although Kahn hoped that his own residency would take place the next year (1948-49), Howe’s extended Roman sojourn postponed any need for a successor. In early December of 1949, the time of Howe’s departure, Mary Williams conveys Roberts’ hope that “we may persuade you to come to the American Academy for a period of six months as Architect in Residence under a Fulbright grant.” By this time, Howe was only a few weeks from beginning his chairmanship at Yale, which Kahn has been credited with promoting. It also appears the Academy saw no need to arrange for another resident for that current academic year, since Howe had been in Rome (officially or not) through the fall. That Kahn was directly encouraged to apply for a Fulbright reflects the

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80 Letter, Louis Kahn to George Howe, 13 June 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
81 Letter, George Howe to Louis Kahn, 18 June 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
82 Letter, George Howe to Laurance Roberts, 18 June 1947, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
83 Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” p. 67. However, the encouraging tone of Rapuano’s letter suggests that the barriers to Kahn’s involvement may not have been so extreme.
84 Letter, Mary T. Williams to Louis Kahn, 1 December 1949, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
85 Carter Wiseman calls it “lobbying;” see Louis I. Kahn: Beyond Time and Style: A Life in Architecture (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007) p. 58. Howe in turn is given credit for gaining Kahn the first major project of his career, an addition to the Yale University Art Gallery. See Wiseman, Kahn, p. 67.
close relationship between the newly-established program and the Academy.\textsuperscript{86} A Fulbright would have paid for Kahn’s transportation and maintenance in Rome for as long as a year, in which case the Academy would have merely functioned as his host institution.\textsuperscript{87} This would have both increased his time there and saved the Academy the expense of Kahn’s support at a moment in which its finances were struggling to adjust to postwar inflation in Italy.\textsuperscript{88} However, this would have also required Kahn to undergo an official application process, and likely commit himself to a longer stay in Rome than he wished. As in Howe’s case, Williams requested that Kahn come in early October with the new Fellows, but allowed that “the time probably could be arranged according to your convenience.”\textsuperscript{89}

This letter, which had followed a phone conversation between Williams and Kahn, was apparently ignored. A month later Williams sent a second, more succinct letter:

Mr. Roberts has asked me to tell you that he needs an architect who could be at the Academy for several months beginning next fall. If you could possibly manage to go at that time, he would be glad to take up the matter with the trustees. He hopes very much, however, that if this is not convenient for you, you will be interested in applying for a Fulbright Scholarship another year, which would enable you to be at the Academy for a period of six months.\textsuperscript{90}

Soon after receiving this letter Kahn visited the Academy’s New York office in January, during which he agreed verbally to come to the Academy that fall, but apparently rejected the Fulbright

\textsuperscript{86} Williams even arranged to have an application sent to him, gave advice on how to fill it out, and offers to forward it to Washington on his behalf. Eugene Johnson notes the preservation of an application for 1950-51, uncompleted and still in its original envelope, that was sent directly to Kahn from the Fulbright Committee in Washington. Surviving correspondence shows that the Academy took a direct interest in the Fulbright Bill, working to ensure that it could be a host institution for U.S. scholars abroad. See letters, J. K. Smith to Senator Fulbright, 25 June 1946 [5759: 516] and Fulbright to Smith, 27 June 1946, [5759: 517], L. Roberts to R. Morey, 18 December 1947, [5798: 1466-67] and L. Roberts to IIE, 16 January 1948 [5798: 1466-67]; AAR Records, AAA. Also, Roberts served on the Fulbright Board for Italy from 1949-1959; see “Resolution,” R. G. Storey, Chairman, U.S. Department of State, The Board of Foreign Scholarships, 12 October 1959, “Correspondence 1959 Re: Resignation from AAR,” Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.

\textsuperscript{87} Williams’ letter states that Kahn would have received anywhere from $3500-$6000 of support (“depending on the number of one’s dependents, length of time spent in Italy, etc.”) in addition to passage by ocean liner. She also notes that Resident Architects are provided with fully equipped “housekeeping apartments,” for which they pay the Academy utility costs.

\textsuperscript{88} See the Valentines on external fellowships and postwar finances; \textit{American Academy}, pp. 112-116.

\textsuperscript{89} Letter, M. Williams to L. Kahn, 1 December 1949, Kahn Collection, AAUP.

\textsuperscript{90} Letter, M. Williams to L. Kahn, 4 January 1950, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
option outright. Roberts afterwards offered Kahn terms that were significantly reduced from Howe’s: a stipend of $1200 for four months (versus Howe’s $2000), and only slightly higher travel reimbursement ($1000 versus Howe’s $900)—a total of $2200 versus $2900. Kahn (who may have known exactly how much support Howe received) protested and accepted a counteroffer of $2000 plus $600 for travel. While invited to sail with the fellows to Naples on September 21, Kahn postponed his departure, finally stating that he would fly to Rome at the end of November. Kahn eventually arrived on December 1 and left Europe near the end of February 1951.

Kahn’s association with the Academy is by far the best-known and most celebrated of its postwar architectural history. His residency is seldom excluded from any broad discussion of Kahn’s career and work, and has itself received extended treatment in an exhibition catalog essay by Eugene Johnson. That so much is known about Kahn’s travels and activities during this brief three-month period not only reflects decades of intense scholarly interest in his career, but has been possible because Kahn preserved so much of his correspondence with the Academy and left an extensive documentary record in the form of travel sketches. Ninety drawings have been preserved or documented, most of which can be identified by specific location.

91 Letters, L. Roberts to L. Kahn, 17 February 1950; and L. Kahn to L. Roberts, 20 March 1950, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
92 Letters, L. Kahn to M. Williams, 20 March 1950, and M. Williams to L. Kahn, 30 March 1950. Williams confirms Kahn’s acceptance of these terms in a letter of 19 April 1950; Kahn Collection, AAUP.
93 Kahn told Williams that he has a reservation on the Saturnalia for the 21 of September, which he clearly cancelled later; Letters, L. Kahn to M. Williams, 19 April 1950; M. Williams to L. Kahn, 30 March and 21 November 1950, Kahn Collection, AAUP. The receipt for Kahn’s TWA flight to Rome departing on 30 November is still held in the Kahn Collection, AAUP.
94 Kahn wrote a letter to the Academy fellows from “on board ship” on 1 March 1951. A letter of 21 February 1951 from his partner Kenneth Day states that Kahn was scheduled to sail on the S. S. Isle de France from Le Havre on 27 February 1951. Kahn Collection, AAUP.
95 Eugene Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” in Eugene Johnson and Michael Lewis, eds., Drawn from the Source: The Travel Sketches of Louis I. Kahn (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 66-94. Much of what follows below is a supplement and/or summary of Johnson’s analysis. In footnote 105, p. 128-129 to this article, Johnson is also the first to note that Kahn’s successors as Academy residents comprise a “diverse and interesting lot,” and provides a partial list of these architects. Johnson’s intriguing list was an early motivation for my own research.
Kahn had already traveled in Europe over twenty years earlier, spending five months of his year-long journey of 1928-29 in Italy.\footnote{Hochstim states that Kahn left for England in April of 1928, and returned in the fall of 1929, whereas Michael Lewis dates his trip from May 1928 to April 1929 (“Graphic Modernism,” p. 7). Hochstim notes that on this voyage his output of travel drawings depicting Italian sites was exponentially greater than that of all other locations combined: “It was Italy which triggered an avalanche of artistic production.” See Hochstim, Paintings and Sketches, p. 49.} His chief interests during this first trip, as evidenced by the drawings he produced, were Italy’s picturesque medieval and natural landscapes.\footnote{Michael J. Lewis argues that during this trip, which took place before Kahn’s “conversion” from Beaux-Arts historicism to modern architecture, his fundamental artistic orientation shifted from representational emphasis on detail and texture towards what he terms a “graphic modernism.” See “Kahn’s Graphic Modernism,” in Johnson and Lewis, eds., Drawn from the Source.} Robert McCarter notes that Kahn’s graphic output during his later, far shorter trip equals that of his first, much longer voyage.\footnote{McCarter, Louis I. Kahn, (London: Phaidon, 2005) p. 56. Eighty-nine have been produced from this first, much longer trip to Europe. See Hochstim, Paintings and Sketches, catalog entries 17-106.} Hochstim has further noted that Kahn’s changed technique, materials, and compositions suggest much faster drawings. He produced bold, often vividly hued images, visually dynamic compositions consisting of forceful strokes and fields of color in pastel, crayon, charcoal, and occasionally brushed ink (figs 3.10-3.11).\footnote{See all ninety preserved drawings from this trip in Hochstim, Paintings and Sketches, p. 242-299.} One of Kahn’s traveling companions recalled that most of his drawings only took about twenty minutes to produce, which enabled his prolific output.\footnote{Hochstim, Paintings and Sketches, p. 241.} In addition, he had consciously decided to use drawing as his primary documentary and analytical tool during his travels (there is no mention of him ever taking photographs). Even when producing his sketches quickly, the act of drawing was a slower, more consciously analytical method of recording and absorbing the sites he visited, and he pursued this activity with a certain rigor.

This graphic record consists of twenty-four drawings depicting Italian sites in Rome, Tivoli, Ostia, Siena, Florence, Pisa, and Venice.\footnote{Johnson’s stylistic analysis of Kahn’s pastels leads him to posit a specific chronology for these drawings; see “Sketching Abroad,” p. 90-94. His suggested sequence for the pastels is: Piazza San Pietro, Siena, Roman ruins, Egypt, Greece, the Campidoglio, and Venice. If valid, this would suggest that Kahn took his trip to Tuscany in December (which likely included Florence and Pisa, where he drew in other media), and went to Venice after his return from Egypt and Greece in February (possibly even on his way to Paris, from whence he departed). Kahn would have had easy access to ancient sites near Rome like Tivoli and Ostia throughout most of his stay.} Of the others, thirty-six were drawn at sites in Egypt, and the remaining thirty in Greece, during the trip Kahn took with five younger members of the
Academy community. These were architecture fellows Spero Daltas and Joseph Amisano, Amisano’s wife Dorothy, landscape architecture fellow George Patton, and architect William H. (“Fritz”) Sippel. Sippel was not officially an Academy fellow, but spent time there in residence as recipient of the Lloyd Warren Rome Prize (also known as the Paris Prize). A previously unpublished but important visual record of this trip, in addition to Kahn’s drawings, is the large number of Kodachrome slides taken by Patton during their travels. A handful depict Kahn and his companions, the only known photographic record of this trip to date (figs. 3.12-3.15). Others depict the same sites and monuments that Kahn would draw, often from similar or identical angles to those seen in Kahn’s sketches (fig. 3.16).

According to most sources, the group flew from Rome to Cairo, where they were delayed because Sippel contracted malaria and needed hospitalization. During this extended stay in Egypt, Kahn made multiple visits to the pyramids at Giza and Saqqara, of which twelve drawings survive. After Sippel’s recovery, they visited Aswan, Luxor, and Karnak before flying to Athens, from whence they would proceed to Corinth, Mycenae, Epidaurus, and Delphi. A number of anecdotes from these travels and observations about Kahn’s stay in Rome have been shared by his traveling companions, such as Amisano’s recollections of a nauseating bus ride to Corinth and bitter,

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103 According to the chronology in Brownlee and De Long, this trip took place from January 5-February 2 of 1951; see Kahn, p. 430.
104 Hochstim, Paintings and Drawings, p. 241.
105 Hochstim, Paintings and Drawings, p. 241. According to Sippel’s obituary, he was educated at Penn State and Princeton, and his fellowship sponsored study at both the Academy and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. See Patricia Lowry, “William H. Sippel Jr.: Modernist Architect, Civic Arena Designer,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (February 14, 2007). Today, the Paris Prize and its parent organization, the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects, have become the New York Prize, awarded by the Van Alen Institute, named in honor of the Chrysler Building’s architect.
106 These are preserved in the George H. Patton Collection, AAUP. My heartfelt thanks to curator William Whitaker for bringing these slides to my attention.
107 Hochstim bases this on Sippel’s recollections in Paintings and Sketches, p. 241. The interview with Joseph Amisano is found in Richard Saul Wurman, What Will Be Has Always Been: The Words of Louis I. Kahn (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), states that they traveled on Egyptian airlines, but that “we left Rome by way of Foggia and then went on to Athens” with intermediate stops until “the wheels touched Greece.” Amisano makes no direct mention of Egypt; p. 266. Kahn sent his office one postcard each from Egypt and Greece, but neither one has a date or legible dated postmark.
108 See Hochstim, Paintings and Drawings, catalog entries 410-421.
damp cold at their unheated hotel there in January.\textsuperscript{109} Daltas describes Kahn spending his afternoons in the Academy’s garden, contemplating the sites he had visited in the morning.\textsuperscript{110}

Such stories are published as fodder for and in response to the widely shared belief in the creative impact of Kahn’s travels upon his later work. For Howe, his Academy period was a mere capstone to his career, a pleasurable interlude between early years in practice and bureaucracy and his final position at Yale. In contrast, nearly all studies of Kahn’s work give his Academy residency far more than just passing mention, and consider it a significant creative catalyst. Most accounts weave its impact directly into critical readings of the nature and significance of his small but highly esteemed corpus of buildings, especially those from the late 1950s onward.\textsuperscript{111} Kahn’s residency occurred just before his late-blooming practice took off with the first major project of his career, the Yale University Art Gallery of 1951–54. Ever since Vincent Scully first asserted the importance of Kahn’s Academy sojourn in 1962, it has attained a near-mythical status.\textsuperscript{112} Following Scully’s lead, most critics have credited Kahn’s brief travels with profoundly re-orienting and redefining his architecture. According to Jan Hochstim, “this short period allowed Kahn to realize the long-sought crystallization of his design theories,” and “the legacy of this late awakening resulted in an architecture of great influence and an embodiment of his creative genius.”\textsuperscript{113} Eugene Johnson describes his stay as a trip “that fundamentally altered his approach to architecture,” and asserts that “these three months redirected his whole career.”\textsuperscript{114} Brownlee and De Long wrote that “his stay there [at the Academy] was relatively brief—only three months—yet it seemed to have effect, for afterward the direction of his work began its decisive change.”\textsuperscript{115} Robert McCarter writes that

\textsuperscript{109} Wurman, \textit{What Will Be}, p. 266.
\textsuperscript{110} Cited by McCarter, \textit{Kahn}, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{111} One exception is Weisman’s comparatively perfunctory treatment on his way to discussion of the Yale University Art Gallery. See \textit{Kahn}, p. 64-66.
\textsuperscript{112} Scully, \textit{Kahn}, p. 17-19.
\textsuperscript{113} Hochstim, \textit{Paintings and Drawings}, p. 241.
\textsuperscript{114} Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” p. 66.
\textsuperscript{115} Brownlee and De Long (who mistakenly describe Kahn as an Academy fellow), \textit{Kahn}, pp. 50-51.
“despite the brevity of his stay the effect on him could hardly have been more profound,” and the documentary film by Kahn’s son presents this event in a similar light.\textsuperscript{116}

One dissenting scholar, Sarah Williams Goldhagen, finds the pervasive trope of Rome as a pivotal, career-changing fulcrum in Kahn’s career problematically overstated. She includes it among her list of “myths” about Kahn’s work that require the corrective revisiting offered by her own study.\textsuperscript{117} Goldhagen’s intentionally provocative position about the nature and significance of Kahn’s Academy stay is one part of her overall project to reassert and “situate” Kahn’s career within a broader political, artistic, and intellectual framework, ultimately affirming his essential status as a modernist.\textsuperscript{118} She writes against a perceived stereotype, according to which his encounter with ancient architecture in Rome, Egypt and Greece in the winter of 1950–51 led him towards a historically-grounded formal vocabulary and thus connects him more closely to the world of postmodern historicism which he supposedly inspired.

While Goldhagen’s “myths” have been criticized as exaggerations or oversimplified straw men for her argument, the authors cited above do demonstrate a clear tradition of using Rome to divide Kahn’s career into two distinct periods.\textsuperscript{119} Scully began this with his colorful assertion that, thanks to its newly modern creative and intellectual postwar spirit, antiquity “came alive for those members of the Academy who had the wit to see it, and for Kahn it must have been as if a rather baggy mistress, abandoned in the bread lines, had walked youthful into the room.”\textsuperscript{120} He noted that the Academy’s more ideologically open institutional environment allowed the greatest surviving monuments of ancient architecture to be “seen anew with an intensity of vision the Beaux-Arts had

\textsuperscript{117} Sarah Williams Goldhagen, \textit{Louis I. Kahn’s Situated Modernism} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{118} Goldhagen, Kahn, pp. 52-54.
\textsuperscript{120} Scully, \textit{Kahn}, p. 18.
never been able to summon up.” Scully emphasizes Rome’s relation to Kahn’s training at Penn in the 1920s, and claims that at mid-century “the principles of modern architecture were...approaching those which Kahn had learned from the Beaux-Arts.” He presents this Beaux-Arts education in both negative and positive terms: as a restricted, superficial framework from which to view history, it was something to escape; as a positive grounding in rationalistic planning principles and ordered, symbolic formalism, it was an effective design method to which Kahn could return. Decades later, Neil Levine would assert that “one cannot understand [Kahn’s] work, as a whole, without considering his reception of ancient Roman forms and typologies in the 1950s.”

That Kahn’s Academy stay provided him with a “putative epiphany, or even epiphanies,” or even that antiquity was his chief interest while there, is a notion that Goldhagen actively resists. She defines the primary focus of his residency as a “dual-pronged investigation into Albersian abstraction and Abstract Expressionism,” and sees Kahn’s travel drawings as “forays into a more expressionistic vocabulary” with their “quick, scrawl-like lines and lurid colors,” observing their visual debt to the contemporary avant-garde. She also correctly points out that much of Kahn’s design work in the immediate aftermath of his return from Europe, such as his proposed City Hall for Philadelphia with Anne Tyng (1953), are space frames that appear more inspired by Buckminster Fuller than anything he would have seen during his travels. This agrees with Tyng’s later assertions that art historians have overstated the extent to which Kahn’s travel drawings document his

121 Scully, Kahn, p. 18.
122 Scully, Kahn, p. 19.
123 Scully represents Kahn as being part of a uniquely history-friendly environment at Yale, where “the debilitating hostility between architect and historian...was on the wane” by citing his close contacts with Philip Johnson and his “then very fresh principles of classicizing order” and Kahn’s own tendencies to drop in on Scully’s own history lectures; “San Gimignano, Hadrian’s Villa, and the work of Brunelleschi were rather obsessive favorites at the time.” See Kahn, p. 19.
125 Goldhagen reads Kahn’s style and interests as primarily a reflection of the influence of a different set of fellow Yale faculty in the painting, not architecture or art history department: Josef Albers and Willem de Kooning (the latter, like Kahn, taught only part-time); Kahn, p. 52.
126 Goldhagen, Kahn, pp. 3, 64-69.
discovery of new, immediately inspirational and applicable motifs from ancient monuments, such as the pyramidal form, as opposed to a recognition within antiquity of geometrical universals and ideas that he had long pursued within a modern context.\textsuperscript{127}

Goldhagen’s central position—that Kahn never ceased to be a modernist—is entirely cogent. But the notion that Kahn’s three-month sojourn in Italy, Egypt and Greece reoriented his aesthetic and theoretical priorities is based on more than a desire by critics and postmodern successors to view his work in historicist terms, and to claim him as an architectural ancestor. It is significant that Kahn is known to have visited only one modern building during his stay, Le Corbusier’s Unité d'Habitation (1947-53), then under construction in Marseilles, France.\textsuperscript{128} McCarter notes that

Kahn did not attempt to visit any examples of the [prewar] modern architecture which had so influenced him, and to which he was now so completely committed in his own work. This is a clear indication that Kahn chose his subjects of study on this trip very carefully, focusing intensely on a very few ancient structures.\textsuperscript{129}

Despite his ardent adherence to the Modern Movement, Kahn made a conscious decision to devote this rare, brief sabbatical period to visiting sites that were centuries, often millennia, old. While Goldhagen rightly sees the modernity in Kahn’s artistic representation and analysis of the structures and landscapes he saw, she ignores the intrinsic antiquity of their subjects.

In addition, a famous and oft-cited letter from Kahn to his Philadelphia office, written only five days after his arrival, contains both a confirmation of his explicitly modernist priorities and the suggestion that Rome had an almost instantaneous impact on him, one that contained the kernel of a challenge to that tradition:

\begin{quote}
I firmly realize that the architecture in Italy will remain as the inspirational source of the works of the future. Those who don’t see it that way ought to look again. Our stuff looks tinny compared to it and all the pure forms have been tried in all its variations.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{128} Given Kahn’s short time frame, he likely visited this on his way to Paris at the end of his stay.
\textsuperscript{129} McCarter, \textit{Kahn}, p. 57.
What is necessary is the interpretation of the architecture of Italy as it relates to our knowledge of building and needs. I care little for the restorations (that kind of interpretation) but I see great personal value in reading one’s own approaches to the creation of space modified by the buildings around as the points of departure. I find it of little difficulty translating the masonry construction into steel and concrete and I intend to have the Fellows explore their reactions to what they see into similar aims. They are quite excited about the idea.130

Kahn’s references to “pure forms” and the “creation of space” reflect the orthodox modernist interests he brought with him to Rome. His mention of “the creation of space modified by the buildings around” is consistent with the urban interests that were commonly expressed by other fellows during this period, and his interest in outdoor urban spaces is also evident in the subjects of several of his travel drawings, which depict the piazzas of Rome, Siena, Florence and Pisa, as well as the stated urbanistic interests of other fellows.131 Perhaps his most ambiguous phrase is “translating the masonry construction into steel and concrete.” Kahn does not suggest an outright rejection of the metal frame, but rather an elevation of concrete to stand alongside it, and a consideration of whether their conjoined use might expand his expressive vocabulary.

The most definitive indication of a shift is Kahn’s observation that “our stuff looks tinny,” one of the most-quoted statements from his correspondence. This phrase suggests not just a modulation, but a substantive change in his attitude about one of the most authoritative and ubiquitous ideals of mid-century modern architecture: the asymptotic reduction of the wall to ever-thinner enclosing membranes. George Howe’s reply to a letter from Kahn at the Academy echoes his apparent praise of masonry: “I always knew Rome was your dish. Yes, brick and stone are wonderful.”132 According to Michael Graves, Kahn himself later credited Rome as beginning his abandonment of the formal priorities of the International Style—minimizing the materiality of buildings through more delicate structural frames and dematerialized or transparent envelopes—and

130 Letter, Louis Kahn to office (Dave, Anne, Alice, Bill) of 6 December 1950, KAHN COLLECTION, AAUP. This letter is cited by Johnson, Brownlee and De Long, and Goldhagen.
131 See Hochstim, Paintings and Drawings, catalog entries 333-354.
132 George Howe to Louis Kahn, 22 January 1951, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
rediscovery of the aesthetic value of solidity. Kahn’s letter suggests an almost immediate, visceral reaction to the phenomenal experience of sites defined by massive, solid masonry forms.

Materials were a central concern for modern architects, but these were largely discussed and explored as emblems of modernity, whose technological deployment and “honest” expression should provide the aesthetic basis for contemporary architectural systems. Yet when Goldhagen states that during his Academy stay Kahn “principally explored abstraction and materiality,” she neglects the rich phenomenological resonances of her own vocabulary. Unlike “material,” the term “materiality” conveys a broad range of aesthetic qualities—tactile, audible, olfactory, as well as visual—inherent to a particular physical substance. When Kahn found modern buildings “tinny” to him in comparison to Rome, his choice of adjective implies many shortcomings: an aluminum foil-like physical insubstantiality, a deficiency in musical tone and resonance, and even a disturbingly metallic flavor. It suggests that Kahn had a full-bodied reaction to the sensation of standing among enormous, centuries- or millennia-old, solid masonry structures. According to Amisano, Kahn would “walk up to a building and touch it, like a friend,” a fully tactile form of appreciation. And this reaction had one clear, immediate impact on his work: upon his return, he immediately abandoned the use of steel-framed structures, the mainstay of postwar architectural modernity, in favor of concrete and masonry, never to return.

Scholars have long noted the substantial consonance between Kahn’s later architectural ideas and those being developed at the Academy by historian of ancient Roman architecture Frank E. Brown. A fellow member of Yale’s faculty, Brown was directing the ongoing excavations at Cosa from the Academy and formulating an innovative theoretical framework for ancient Roman architecture.

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134 Wurman, What Will Be, p. 265.
135 McCarter, Kahn, p. 59.
architecture, which he would publish in his *Roman Architecture* of 1961.\textsuperscript{136} He also led trips to ancient Roman sites in and around Rome twice a week, and is fondly remembered by a later Academy fellow as “so at home in the Roman ruins that he seems no longer a part of the modern world.”\textsuperscript{137} But it is not Brown’s depth of classical knowledge that is considered most influential on Kahn, but his model of the essential nature and meaning of Roman architecture. Because his 1961 book is full of ideas and phrases that echo both Kahn’s later buildings and his explanations of their essence, their time together at the Academy is often identified as profoundly influential on Kahn.

Brown would describe Roman architectural forms as “an art of shaping space around ritual,” whose formal essence was a set of “capsules” that arose from and reflected a spatial projection of socially established ceremonies.\textsuperscript{138} Such a behaviorally-grounded model of buildings as interior volumes whose forms originated in the practices of one particular community fit the dramatically vaulted spaces and highly performative culture of the ancient Romans. This notion was also fundamentally and provocatively antithetical to another dominant doctrine of modern architecture: Miesian free space (the *Raumplan*). In Johnson’s view, Brown’s ideas “offered Kahn a theoretical corrective to the modernist notion of universal space, one that was infinitely flexible, that could easily change function as the users of the building might require.”\textsuperscript{139} Kahn would eventually abandon flexible interiors and design clearly demarcated, solidly volumetric forms. He would also define his buildings’ genesis in human spatio-behavioral patterns, such as people entering and passing through ambulatories into worship spaces, or taking a book from a library shelf to the light for reading.\textsuperscript{140}

The many conceptual and formal parallels between Kahn and Brown’s ideas are noteworthy, although, given that Kahn’s visit took place a decade before Brown’s ideas were published, it is

\textsuperscript{137} Statement by Michael Schwarting (FAAR Architecture 1970), in an interview with McCarter; *Kahn*, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{139} Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” p. 68.
\textsuperscript{140} Another example of parallel statements by Kahn and Brown is the notion that a street “wants to be a building;” Brown wrote that the Roman street “became a substantive building.” See Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” p. 69.
possible that Kahn might have made contributions to Brown’s thinking as well. Certainly the one thing that Kahn might not have learned from a classicist was his aesthetic appreciation for the ruin qua ruin: “monumental buildings, stripped ages ago of their decorations, their brick relieving arches revealed, their massive brick and concrete structural walls and vaults exposed, showing how they were made.” Architectural historian James Ackerman, an Academy Fellow in art history during Kahn’s stay, recalled that Kahn showed a specific fascination for the excavation holes in the Roman Forum during their visits there—not the ancient remains, nor their imagined reconstruction, but the spatial qualities of the enormous cavities produced by archaeological practice. Levine has argued that Kahn’s experience of ruins while at the Academy, specifically their architectural incompleteness, would become a profoundly important aesthetic and theoretical component of his later work.

He may have had another teacher pointing him towards this view of Rome, a figure of undeniable importance in Kahn’s career had presented the city’s significance in a very similar and seemingly prophetic light almost thirty years before. Le Corbusier’s *Vers une architecture*, a gospel text for Kahn, scorns Rome for its density and visual chaos. But it does identify one nugget of architectural value amidst all the putti and the stucco: the structurally and sculpturally innovative forms produced by Rome’s ancient engineers, forms whose true beauty is best seen in ruins, stripped of obfuscating decorative veneers. In Le Corbusier’s view, better preserved monuments like the Pantheon must be visually edited and abstracted to be truly “seen,” a process literalized in his doctored photographs that efface altars, paintings, and other “distractions” from pure form. He would have stripped and discarded its distracting stone revetment if he could, declaring:

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142 See Johnson, “Sketching Abroad,” p. 87.
143 Levine, “Architecture Between Need and Desire.”
145 Neil Levine notes that this notion of “stripping” Roman architecture to discover the engineered volumes beneath deceptively trabeated-seeming surfaces originated with Viollet-le-Duc; see his “Robert Venturi and ‘The Return of
Let us retain, from these Romans, the bricks and Roman cement and travertine stone, and let’s sell Roman marble to the millionaires. The Romans knew nothing about marble.  

Vers une architecture’s celebration of the ruin, of pure, naked form exposed by time, and even its list of materials worthy of modern re-appropriation—Kahn’s mature vocabulary would emphasize concrete, brick and even travertine—are highly prophetic of Kahn’s absorption of antiquity and the primal geometric forms, solidity, and enclosure that would appear in his later work. In light of “The Lesson of Rome,” a building like his Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (1966-72), with its daringly suspended ellipsoid vaults, its repeated volumetric module, and its use of concrete and travertine, seems to cite not just Frank Brown’s model of Roman architecture, or an entirely personal, tactile encounter with Roman ruins (fig. 3.17). It also suggests that the preparatory groundwork for these experiences was laid by Le Corbusier’s canonic reading of the city’s “lessons” for modern architects.

It was also Le Corbusier whose Unité, the only modern work Kahn chose to visit during his sabbatical (one being compared to the Doric temples of Paestum by contemporary critics) was a new type of modern architecture freely sculpted out of concrete, a material both ancient in its history and entirely modern in its industrial era re-formulation. But Kahn’s status as an architect would hardly be so exalted in later years had he not forged all of these ideas, influences and precedents into original buildings worthy of study and analysis in their own right. Kahn described his own formal approach to later works as “wrapping ruins around buildings.”147 Levine states that:

Kahn’s use of ancient Roman precedent was of a different order [than his peers]: it was more explicitly historicizing and yet more fully integrated at both the structural and conceptual levels.148

Furthermore, he notes that Kahn’s approach allowed him

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146 Le Corbusier, Toward an Architecture, p. 200.
to avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia and sentimentality usually associated with the cult of ruins. At the same time, and surely more central to his thought, it allowed him to make history modern…

Goldhagen is correct, though not alone, in emphasizing that Kahn’s “mature” works reflect a gradual absorption and reworking of influences from throughout his long development. It is also entirely accurate to say that what Kahn discovered in antiquity were attributes that were fully consonant with modernism. But to look at Kahn’s travel sketches, which have been studied with almost fetishistic intensity, and see only an exploration of abstraction, is to ignore what is their (usually) identifiable subject matter, and the fact that they were only one part of a fully phenomenal experience of their subjects. Kahn’s unique standing among twentieth-century architects is fed by the palpable duality seen in both his buildings and his drawings: a truly “modern” re-presentation of the archetypal significance of ancient architecture in terms of mass, pure geometry, sociological fitness, and raw physicality. Kahn had long been seeking a more solid basis for architectural significance, and his Academy stay changed the terms in which he considered his discipline’s most basic issues. He sought not the historical, but the timeless; not the ever-fleeting Zeitgeist, but the spirit of architecture itself.

Residents After Kahn: The 1950s

Months after Kahn had returned to the U.S., and years before his Academy stay would become the fulcrum of his creative mythology, he received a grateful letter from Laurance Roberts:

…what an excellent job you did for the Academy. If it is not too late, can I send you my thanks now, and add that when I returned here early in March I had never seen before such an excited and interested group of architects as those whom you took to Egypt and Greece.

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As you know all too well, people can get very stodgy here and become intellectually stale. You gave the Academy just the right shot in the arm and gave the architects the most exciting winter that any group has had here since I’ve been in Rome.¹⁵⁰

Roberts’ *Annual Report* for 1950-51 describes this trip as “the high point in the Academy’s postwar history.”¹⁵¹ Kahn would remain involved in the Academy in many ways for the rest of his career: he received letters almost annually asking him to invite “any outstanding young architects in your office” to apply for the Rome Prize.¹⁵² He also served on the Rome Prize juries for 1952 and 1959, and was invited to do so again in 1964.¹⁵³ In later years, Kahn would be a frequent and welcome visitor, especially on his way to and from Dhaka, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) while working on its capitol complex. Kahn described the Academy as “my inn in Rome,” and wrote that “to come back to the Academy which I hold with dearest regard I look forward to. The four [sic] months that I spent in residence there I shall never forget.”¹⁵⁴

Architect Richard Kimball (1906-1997), the Academy’s Director from 1959-65, echoed Roberts’ praise of fifteen years earlier when he extended Kahn a wholehearted and open-ended invitation to visit in 1965:

> It is always stimulating for me and our Fellows to have you visit us. It would be particularly exciting for them also to see the development for your scheme for Pakistan. Whenever you have a definite date for your next trip, plan to spend a day or two with us, or longer if you can, and have your secretary let me know what time you arrive in Rome. You can arrange it either coming or going, and as I have often told you, all you have to do is let me know when you are arriving and we will always have a bed for you.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Letter, Laurence Roberts to Louis Kahn, 31 July 1951, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
¹⁵¹ *AAR Annual Report 1950-51*, AAR Archives.
¹⁵² Kahn’s papers include such letters for the years 1959, 1960, 1963, 1964, and 1965. His collection also includes many letters of recommendation written by him for Rome Prize applications. There is no way to know how unusual this was; I have found no records of similar requests to other architecture Residents.
¹⁵³ See both the list of architecture juries held by the AAR Archives, and letters, Mary T. Williams to Kahn dated 7 January 1952, 19 December 1958, 12 March 1959, and 7 January 1964, and Louis Kahn to M. T. Williams, 21 January 1952, Kahn Collection, AAUP, AAUP.
¹⁵⁴ Letters, L. Kahn to Academy Director Richard. A. Kimball, 15 August 1963 and 1 September 1961, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
¹⁵⁵ Letter, Richard Kimball to Louis Kahn, 21 January, 1965, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
Even Kahn’s participation in the Academy’s alumni organization was perceived by his peers as being of a different, higher order which elevated the tone of its events. Olindo Grossi (FAAR 1933-35), Dean of Architecture at the Pratt Institute and the alumni association’s president, wrote to Kahn in 1959 thanking him for speech he delivered to a recent alumni gathering: “your meaningful remarks lent a proper professional character to what usually is only an event for good fellowship.”\(^{156}\) Neil Levine credits Kahn’s short stay at the Academy with removing “the stigma of regressive conservatism from the Academy’s reputation and helped make Rome once again the place to go in the minds of a younger generation of architects.”\(^{157}\) In fact, in 1961 Michael Graves, then a young fellow at the Academy, wrote to Kahn after hearing a rumor that he might visit so he could rearrange his European travel plans in order to not miss him.\(^{158}\) For Joseph Amisano, who accompanied Kahn to Egypt and Greece, the significance of his Academy stay diminished sharply after Kahn’s departure; he goes so far as to say “I should have left when Louis did, because without him to sketch with, I bought a camera, and have pitifully little to show for it.”\(^{159}\)

Kahn’s residency provided an impressive start for the 1950s Academy. His value as a stimulating and thoughtful thinker on the relationship between ancient and modern architecture was greatly appreciated by Roberts and those with him in Rome. During these years, his professional reputation as a practitioner was not yet very strong. In the 1956 novel *Native Stone* by Edwin Gilbert, which dramatizes Yale’s architecture department at this period through thinly disguised caricatures of many famous figures, Kahn’s doppelganger (“Homer Jepson”) figures as a never-has-been academic. William Huff, an architecture student at Yale from 1947-52, recalls that when it was

\(^{156}\) Letter, Olindo Grossi to Louis Kahn, 28 May 1959, Kahn Collection, AAUP.


\(^{158}\) See letters, Michael Graves to Louis Kahn, 7 August 1961 and 25 August 1961, and Kahn’s reply to Graves, 1 September 1961, Kahn Collection, AAUP.

\(^{159}\) Amisano interview cited in Wurman, *What Will Be*, p. 266.
announced that Kahn would design the addition to the university’s art gallery, students were disappointed:

When the news broke that George Howe had engineered Kahn’s selection as architect for the Gallery Addition, our hearts sank. Here Howe had the chance to give Yale, indeed, the Nation, a much needed exemplary token of contemporary institutional architecture; and he had blown it on Kahn! The least Howe could have done would have been to have chosen Yale’s very own Eero Saarinen—if he didn’t dare to deal on Mies. Yes, we agreed: “Kahn’s a good teacher, but can he design?”

It may be no coincidence that most surviving evidence of Kahn’s post-residency Academy participation—as featured speaker at an alumni event, Rome Prize juror, and eagerly welcomed visitor in Rome—dates to 1959 and thereafter. While the Yale University Art Gallery inaugurated the most productive late phase of his career in 1951, Kahn would begin to receive far greater attention and critical acclaim following completion of the Trenton Bath House in New Jersey (1954-59) and the Richards Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1957-61), the latter design being frequently linked to Italian influences such as the towers of San Gimignano. The Academy would have had good reason to underscore their association with a rising architectural star by then.

But after Howe—famous and urbane, if somewhat dissipated—and Kahn—rumpled and obscure, but inspiring—the Academy’s search for residents in architecture produced a rather mixed bag for the rest of the decade. In fact, the Academy would have no official architect in residence at all for three successive years of this decade: 1954-57. Kahn’s successor at the Academy for 1951-52 was Frederick J. Woodbridge, an architecture fellow from 1920-23 who worked at McKim, Mead and White upon his return and was part of the Academy’s prewar generation. His New York firm of Adams and Woodbridge was modestly successful, and he would later serve as Columbia University’s consulting architect after 1956 and on New York’s Art Commission (1956-59) and its Landmarks

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161 The academy did have an unofficial “resident architect” for 1954-55, Ernesto Rogers, whose involvement shall be discussed below.
Commission (1962-65). But Woodbridge was a figure of limited local reputation without anything like the national visibility of Howe or even Kahn. However, as an alumnus he was an Academy “insider,” unlike the previous residents who both lacked any prior association with the institution. Also unlike Howe and Kahn, Woodbridge went to the Academy as a Fulbright Scholar, and thus spared it the expense of supporting his residency financially. Roberts writes that he helped Frank Brown with architectural work for the Cosa excavations, developed a landscape plan for the Academy’s back lot, and was a helpful guide on field trips.

Two other architecture residents during the 1950s were neither nationally prominent practitioners nor Academy insiders, but had careers largely confined to academia. The most prestigious by far was Jean Labatut of Princeton, discussed in the previous chapter in relation to that university. Labatut first came in residence in the spring of 1953, would return in the spring of 1959, 1964, and again in 1968. Another architecture professor from Princeton, Labatut’s colleague

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162 See Woodbridge’s obituary in the New York Times (Jan. 18, 1974). He taught at Columbia University from 1934-42.
164 The Annual Report for 1951-52 notes that the Academy’s “architects traveled to Austria, Denmark, Germany and Spain,” but does not specify if this travel took place with or without Woodbridge; p. 15.
165 Roberts also writes that “with the Fellows he’s cheerful and a lot of fun,” and that Woodbridge “has fine ideas about making each of the Fellows talk and explain more about his work, in an attempt to break down a little of the isolationism which sometimes gets built up around each studio.” Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 10 January 1952, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1018-19].
166 Labatut sailed for Naples on 19 February 1953, and Roberts mentions in April 1953 that Labatut, then in France, had “been excellent in taking the architects around.” Roberts also writes in June that Labatut’s influence was gradually softening one of the architecture fellows (Richard Barringer, a GSD alumnus) whose “fidelity to one extreme form of architecture has made it a bit hard for the rest of us.” Letters, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 20 February 1953; 8 April 1953; and 23 June 1953; AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1049, 1055, 1064]. Additional traces of Labatut’s four stays are held in the Jean Labatut Papers, Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. A preserved copy of a letter from Labatut to Pier Luigi Nervi thanks him for “votre aimable acceuil” in Rome (28 July 1953, Box 8, Folder 10); other letters written by Labatut on AAR letterhead survive from April and June 1959 (J. Labatut to George Rowley, 24 April 1959, Box 9 Folder 7 and Jean Labatut to Luis Fernandes Pinto, 1 June 1959, Box 9, Folder 2). One letter to a Toulouse hotel on AAR letterhead is dated 25 March 1964 (Box 59 Folder 13), and another from an architect working in Rome mentions Labatut’s expected arrival in Rome on 15 October 1964 (William Ahrens to J. Labatut, 1 October 1964, Box 1, Folder 1). A letter from the Academy confirms that he will arrive for his fourth residency around the end of February 1968 (Mary T. Williams to J. Labatut, 6 July 1967, Box 21, Folder 2). Two other unaddressed notes on AAR letterhead describe his activities and travels with the fellows; dated 15 and 27 June 1968 (Box 21, Folder 2). A passenger list from the Leonardo da Vinci names Mr. and Mrs. Labatut among the passengers for the crossing from New York to Cannes departing 2 October 1964, and another for the “Italia” making the same voyage on 11 March 1968 (Box 59, Folder 10). A handful of photographs of the 1968 crossing and in the Piazza S. Pietro in Rome are all dated March 1968 (Box 59, Folder 12).
Francis Comstock, came twice in the 1950s: during the 1957-58 year and again in the spring of 1960. Roberts described Labatut as “a wonderfully stimulating person to have had here, and his architectural trips, which each time drew an increasingly large audience, were one of the high points of the year.” However, while Labatut is remembered as the driving force in a unique program that combined modernism with historical awareness, little evidence remains of Comstock’s career beyond his 1966 monograph on an obscure, early-twentieth century British illustrator of medieval architecture and townscapes. It is hard to imagine Comstock was a particularly inspiring presence to young graduates from the modernist programs at the GSD, MIT and Yale. As full-time academics, both Labatut and Comstock had greater freedom to come as residents than architects who needed to support themselves and office staff through their work. As long as their universities granted them leave time during the school year, the Academy’s modest compensation for travel and expenses would likely have been sufficient to their short-term needs.

A far more impressive architecture resident during this period was Pietro Belluschi, who came in residence during the spring of 1954. Belluschi combined a national reputation as a modernist practitioner, the practical flexibility of academic support, and an increasingly powerful

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167 Roberts also notes that Labatut had helped the French exhibition at the Rome Agricultural Fair. Letter, L. Roberts to M. Rapuano, 3 August 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1068].
168 Francis Adams Comstock, A Gothic Vision: F. L. Griggs and His Work (Oxford: Boston Public Library and Ashmolean Museum, 1966). According to the copy held by the Princeton University Library, only 600 copies of this book were printed. In the text, Comstock states that he had met F. L. Griggs (1876-1938), whose etchings depicted Gothic and other British medieval buildings and towns.
169 Although Kahn’s Philadelphia practice did not have a very heavy workload in 1950-51, he had to deal with a great deal of correspondence relating to the Mill Creek Housing project during his three-month Academy stay. See the seven letters from Kahn to various colleagues: 12 December 1950, 19 December 1950, 20 December 1950, 11 January 1951, 18 January 1951, 9 February 1951, and 21 February 1951; Kahn Collection, AAUP.
170 The amount of financial support offered to residents either stayed at the same level as Howe’s in 1948, or even decreased: in 1968, Labatut was offered $1200 for travel expenses and a $2000 honorarium. See M. T. Williams to J. Labatut, 6 July 1967, Box 21, Folder 2, Labatut Papers. In 1960, Max Abramovitz was offered only an “honorarium” of $1000 for travel costs, which Director Kimball wryly stated proved the job was really “a labor of love.” Letter, R. A. Kimball to M. Abramovitz, 17 June 1960, Max Abramovitz Papers, Avery Archives.
171 Clausen, p. 233 says “in 1954,” which suggests he came in the second half of the 1953-54 academic year. This is corroborated by Academy correspondence (see n. 170 below).
position in the postwar profession. He had left a successful Oregon-based practice to succeed William Wurster as Dean of Architecture and Urban Planning at MIT in 1951, a position he would hold until 1965 while continuing private practice in affiliation with other firms, including Walter Gropius and The Architects’ Collaborative (TAC). Belluschi had also been appointed by President Truman to the National Commission of Fine Arts in 1950, the first of many powerful boards upon which he would serve in coming years. He arrived in early May of 1954 and spent the summer, taking groups of fellows on trips to Greece, Puglia and Tuscany. A statement in the Academy’s Annual Report for 1953-54 also mentions that “Dean Belluschi introduced the Fellows to Italian contemporary architecture.” The following year, in May of 1955, Robert Venturi mentions that Belluschi “stopped in at the Academy en route from India back to the U.S.”

Yet immediately afterwards, the Academy went for three consecutive years, 1954-57, without successfully arranging for any American architect or architecture professor to come as a resident, a gap that is never discussed directly as a problem in any of the surviving correspondence. During the first of these years it arranged a successful compromise solution by inviting Milanese architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers to visit in the fall of 1954. Rogers had a longstanding international prominence as part of the firm Belgiojoso, Banfi, Peressuti and Rogers (BBPR), was the editor of the respected journal Casabella-Continuità, on the architecture faculty at the Politecnico di Milano, and

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172 Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 20 Feb. 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759-1048]: “Everyone liked Dean Belluschi at the architectural meetings. His judgment impressed me enormously and justified all the enthusiastic recommendations that Mike Rapuano had given me about him…. As you know, his name was already on the panel of architects in residence, and I have this day written to him to see if he could get of for three months from his job at M.I.T. to be with us next year.”


174 Clausen, Belluschi, p. viii.

175 Letters, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 5 May and 19 August 1954, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1083, 1086].


had taught at MIT since the war. His firm was designing the Torre Velasca for Milano (1952-57), a building that would spark a heated debate about the relationship between history, formalism, and modernity with British critic Reyner Banham (fig. 3.18). The Annual Report for 1954-55 states that “the Milan architect Ernesto Rogers supervised a collaborative project for the fine arts fellows,” in which they proposed use of Academy’s garden for additional studios.

As it turns out, the impetus to bring Rogers to the Academy came from the fellows themselves. Roberts wrote to Smith:

The Fellows in architecture have asked me about the possibility of having some Italian architect, say Ernesto Rogers of Milan, direct them for a month during the winter in a collaborative problem. This, frankly, is exactly what I have been hoping would happen, and I would strongly support them in this general idea as well as the choice of Rogers.

Later confirming that Rogers would come in January, Roberts adds: “Rogers is, as you know, about the most respected architect in Italy by the younger generation.” The fellows would be quite pleased with his involvement: Robert Venturi, who began his fellowship in 1954, writes to his parents enthusiastically about his interaction with Rogers. Venturi also mentions the importance of his inspiring presence in a post-fellowship letter to the Academy’s president: “I owe a particular debt to Ernesto Rogers there, for his friendship and his introduction to the best of current Italian architecture.” Given Rogers’ apparent success, it would seem that similar invitations to
internationally prominent European architects would be a logical solution whenever no suitable American practitioner was available. The fact that Rogers is not included in the Academy’s directory as an official architect in residence may indicate that the trustees objected to supporting non-U.S. citizens, and appointments of other European artists or scholars as residents were not repeated during the 1950s. Eventually, at an unspecified date but likely sometime during Wallace Harrison’s trusteeship (1959-64), he and his partner Max Abramovitz “established a fund to relieve the Academy of the expense for the foreign artists-in-residence.” This dedicated support may be what permitted Europeans like the Dutch architects Jakob Bakema and Aldo van Eyck and Swiss architectural historian Sigfried Giedion to reside officially at the Academy in the 1960s.

However, this solution was likely several years away, and for the next two years (1955-57) the Academy had no senior architect in residence, officially or otherwise. Rogers did maintain a degree of informal advisory contact with the fellows during 1955-56. Charles Brickbauer, who came to the Academy in the fall of 1955, writes in his renewal statement:

I should [also] like to be able to continue my contacts with the various Italian architects and artists that appear here at the Academy from time [to] time. Particularly those of the architect Ernesto Rogers, whose critiques and discussions of modern architecture and of the projects we are doing under him, and always illuminating and interesting.

Dan Stewart, who also arrived in 1955, similarly mentions his “work with Ernesto Rogers” in his request for renewal of his fellowship. Despite Rogers’ ongoing but informal involvement, a draft of a letter by Robert Venturi indicates who the Academy had asked to come serve in residence, and his own hopes on that front:

Dear Lou:

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185 Lucia and Alan Valentine, Academy, p. 110-111.
The many of us here who know you were very sorry to find on Lawrence’s [sic] return from New York early this month that you (and no other architect for that matter) had not been invited here by the Academy for a period this spring, after Eero’s last minit [sic] notice that he would not come. A few travels with you in Italy would have made for the most exciting experiences and later, the most treasured memories I can think of. Maybe it can still happen another year.

The “Lou” is certainly Kahn, although no copy of this letter is preserved in his papers. The “Eero,” of course, could only be Eero Saarinen. This is corroborated by a letter Venturi sent to his parents two months earlier:

We still don’t know who the visiting architect will be here this spring. Ernesto Rogers should be stopping in from Milan, but he has been ill. It might be Eero Saarinen or Lou Kahn. I am (discreetly) rooting for the latter.

Despite Venturi’s own preference for Kahn, who had served on his thesis jury and for whom Venturi would work for seven months upon his return from Rome, Roberts had long been hoping to arrange a residency for Saarinen. After Saarinen’s first, brief visit to the Academy in the fall of 1951, Roberts wrote to President Smith suggesting he be added to the panel of potential future Residents:

Mr. Saarinen seemed to like the Academy so much, and to generate such real enthusiasm and excitement among the Fellows, both new and old, that it seems to me he would be an excellent candidate for a future short term architect in residence. He was deeply interested in all the monuments here, both ancient and more recent, and had a most telling way of pointing out what lessons they had for a present day architect.

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188 Robert Venturi to Lou [Louis I. Kahn], 28 March 1956, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. This typescript appears to be a draft of a letter, with handwritten notes throughout the margins. The phrase “after Eero’s last minit notice that he would not come” has a hand-written strike-through.


191 Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 24 October 1951, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1016]. Roberts also mentions that Saarinen accompanied Woodbridge and the fellows on visits to the nearby villas Lante and Caprarola. His account suggests a palpable contrast between young architects’ reactions to Woodbridge, however capable, and the far more famous, exciting and stimulating Saarinen.
Smith agreed, noting “he would probably be very effective for present day students, and the tour of duty might also be helpful to him. Let’s put it through the usual channels.” Saarinen’s interest in Italy immediately following his Academy visit is discussed in another letter from Venturi to Kahn in November 1951 while Venturi was Saarinen’s employee: “Eero has returned with some wonderful color slides of Italian piazzas, especially that of San Marco, and four copies of engravings of maps of Rome of different periods which give you palpitations [sic] of the heart.” Saarinen had a longstanding interest in Greek and Roman antiquity, and Venturi’s account confirms that he shared the widespread architectural interest in Italian piazzas in the early 1950s. Timo Tuomi has discussed how modernists like Saarinen looked to urban spaces in Venice and Rome as examples of the “usable past” upon which they could model contemporary design solutions, and cites an undated letter (probably 1948-49) in which Saarinen writes: “I would like to go to Rome—or to Italy in general. There I like to study their public squares. I would like to site [sit?] a whole day on Piazza San Marco, and do the same to all the piazzas in Rome.”

Two surviving letters in Saarinen’s papers confirm that he had been formally invited to come as a resident for the spring of 1956. The earliest is a January 1956 letter on Academy letterhead signed by “Warren,” who must be Warren Platner, an architecture fellow who, like Venturi, had worked for Saarinen before receiving the Rome Prize. Platner’s letter begins with an apology for

192 Letter, J.K. Smith to L. Roberts, 20 November 1951, 5759:299, AAR Records, AAA. Three months later, Saarinen was officially listed on the slate of potential future residents: “The Fine Arts Committee approved adding Eero Saarinen, [and] Pietro Belluschi (this was Mr. Rapuano’s suggestion and meets with my approval)…to the respective panels.” Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 20 Feb. 1952, AAR Records, AAA [5759-1022].


194 Sketches of ancient Roman buildings that Saarinen included in a letter to his wife of ca. 1935 are reproduced in Pelkonen and Albrecht, Eero Saarinen, p. 340.

interrupting Saarinen’s work on the competition for the U.S. Embassy Chancellery in London, which he would win in February.\textsuperscript{196} He then continues:

Laurance Roberts has, I think, just written to you about your coming here this spring. As you requested, I mentioned to him some time ago that I thought there might be a possibility that you could not come and I think that is the reason for his letter to you now as he is making final plans for the rest of the year.

Platner’s language suggests that Saarinen had previously agreed to a residency, but was trying to back out. While acknowledging he is unlikely to come, Platner expresses his hopes that Saarinen and his wife Aline might still make it to the Academy:

…I would like to see you away from the pressures of the office and would enjoy looking at Italy with you but because I think the others here, the architects especially but also the painters and sculptors, would appreciate your viewpoints. They would find you stimulating and I think you would find them interesting as they are quite a mixed group but are constantly exchanging ideas. Incidentally, one of the sculptors here (Hadzi) is about to exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in April I believe [sic]; his work is quite mature and he is full of ideas.\textsuperscript{197}

At this moment Saarinen was one of the country’s most successful and well-known architects, and he would appear on the cover of \textit{Time} magazine that same summer.\textsuperscript{198} Platner’s description of the fellows as a “mixed group” and mention of Hadzi’s upcoming MoMA exhibition emphasizes the modernity, heterogeneity and artistic legitimacy of the Academy community, perhaps in an attempt to convince Saarinen that it would provide him with creative stimulation beyond a break from his notoriously frenetic work schedule.

Saarinen’s reply to Platner mentions his intense pace of work and makes it clear that a possible stay at the Academy is secondary to other, more pressing priorities:


\textsuperscript{197} Warren [Platner] to Eero Saarinen, 16 January 1956, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Platner also mentions “I have seen Ernesto Rogers and Albini as well as several other Italian architects.”

\textsuperscript{198} “Maturing Modern,” \textit{Time}, July 2, 1956. Inside this issue, Cranston Jones describes Saarinen as one of his generation’s leading architects.
Our itinerary has to remain flexible because Aline’s purpose in going to Florence is to see 81-year-old Art Critic Bernard Behrenson [sic], and he may decide to go to Rome or Venice or Tarmina [sic]—in London we will know and wire you word.

Everything goes well in the office. Last charrette was London—we have now resolved this into what I think will be a really good building. At present, the charrette is I.B.M. 199

The Saarinens apparently never made it to Rome in 1956. Another letter from that fall shows that other arrangements to get a major architecture critic to the Academy for that year fell apart:

Mr. Louis [sic] Mumford has just written to say that for family reasons he will be unable to come this winter, but might briefly [be] in Rome in the Spring. I am distressed about this as everyone is looking forward to seeing him here, and as I have counted on his being at the Academy. He was to be here for three months beginning December. 200

As a major urban theorist who emphasized the humane dimensions of civic design, Mumford had been the architecture critic for The New Yorker since 1931, a well-known figure even before the publication of his influential The City in History in 1961. 201 Given the pervasive interests in urbanism expressed by architecture fellows, he would have been an exceptionally stimulating presence at the Academy, providing an important counterpoint to the more monumental, Baroque-inspired urbanism emphasized by figures like Giedion. However, while Mumford would travel extensively in Italy, including Rome, during the summer of 1957, he did not officially come to the Academy until the late 1960s, when he is listed as a “notable visitor” from between 1964-68. 202

As much as the identities of the established architects who did go to Rome, this three-year hiatus in official residencies and evidence of rejected invitations by two prominent figures is a significant part of the Academy’s postwar history, one that merits consideration. The Academy,

199 Saarinen to Warren [Platner], 22 May 1956, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
201 Mumford wrote the New Yorker’s “Sky Line” column from 1931-1963, one of the most prominent of his many pursuits. See Donald L. Miller, Lewis Mumford: A Life (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), pp. 170, 487.
202 Mumford is on record as an official visitor to the Academy during 1964-68; s.v. Kohl, et al., Centennial Directory. According to the Annual Report for 1966-67, he led an Academy seminar entitled “Technics and Human Development” in late May of 1967, a visit concurrent with his receipt of an honorary degree at the University of Rome; p. 36-37. His visit to Italy the summer after this letter (part of a larger tour of Europe) included Turin, Venice, Florence, and visits to Bernard Berenson at Villa I Tatti. While in Rome he and his wife stayed at a hotel at the top of the Spanish Steps, and did visit architect Bruno Zevi. See Miller, Mumford, pp. 459-460.
despite its success in redefining itself as an institution that welcomed modern architecture and in attracting Rome Prize applicants from top programs, was still utterly peripheral to the careers of pre-eminent figures like Saarinen and Mumford in 1956. Its appeal to Labatut, for example, may have been primarily as a convenient gateway back to Europe, since he generally included visits to his native France during his multiple residencies. For Belluschi, who preserved no correspondence with the Academy and says nothing about his residency in his later memoirs and interviews, its draw may have been even more pragmatic. He lived in Rome for much of his youth, and visited the city annually after 1951 to visit his mother until her death. Because he had grown up in Italy and left as an adult to practice architecture in America, Rome had no exotic associations for him. His few statements on Italy’s architectural significance emphasize central Italian towns over Rome itself. Belluschi’s Academy invitation might have been most appealing as a means to combine his regular family visit with an opportunity to cultivate advantageous professional connections. Like other West Coast regionalists, he had described the East Coast architectural establishment as the profession’s “mafia.” As a double outsider (Italian-born with an Oregon-based practice) making his second career in Boston, he may well have perceived the value of joining the Academy’s close, multilayered network of associations that included prominent architects, universities, cultural, business, and governmental agencies. In general, for most of the 1950s, the prospect of suspending

203 On Belluschi’s upbringing in Rome, see Clausen, Belluschi, p. 10-15. In 1983, Belluschi stated that “Rome was and still is a very beautiful city. I’ve been there almost every year since 1951, mostly to visit my mother who lived in Rome where she died at age 97.” Meredith Clausen, Interview with Pietro Belluschi, August 22, 23, and September 4, 1983, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

204 In the transcript of an interview with Meredith Clausen held by the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art, Belluschi states: “I’ve been there [Rome] almost every year since 1951, mostly to visit my mother who lived in Rome where she died at age 97.” He also expresses a greater attraction to the smaller towns of central Italy: “So I like to go back to Rome where my best recollections are, but my desire is to visit the central part of Italy which is still beautiful and less spoiled. The small cities are unchanged. Each one was the capital of a Duchy or of a state which through the centuries prospered and produced really fine architecture as well as some of the greatest art the world has seen.”

205 Belluschi also served on the Rome Prize jury for 1954, which would have met in February 1954, shortly before his May residency.

practice to accept a brief residency at the Academy might have been perceived by America’s best-known architects as at best tangential, at worst an outright impediment, to their professional success.

This three-year gap in arranging residencies for American architects may also have been exacerbated by a conflict between Roberts and the Academy establishment that came to a head in the spring of 1953. Director Laurance Roberts, as was acknowledged by President Smith, was responsible for selecting and arranging senior residencies. His choices among architects shows that he had a strong preference for figures who would enhance the Academy’s stature and reputation through association as well as provide rewarding interactions with the fellows and other residents. He held a similar opinion with respect to those appointed to the Board of Trustees: for instance, when recent fellow Walker O. Cain was nominated to the board in 1951, Roberts expressed concerns about Cain’s relative youth “in age and reputation” (he was thirty-three, and had spent his entire career in the firm of McKim, Mead and White). He implies no personal objection to Cain, but states that “for the future when another architect is considered, now that we have a younger man, I think a man of national reputation should be kept in mind.”

Smith’s response shows a very different outlook:

> The Board has in the last year or two become very much concerned about its structure, and where it is going….The desirability of further window dressing of national figures as against that of attracting to the Board people who know the institution, believe in it, and are willing to work hard for it, was debated. For the possible architectural vacancy, Wally Harrison, Skidmore, and God knows how many other men of national reputation were discussed, but the men who knew each of them best expressed the opinion that even if he would accept the election, no real work could be expected from him.

Smith also points notes that in the past, Trustees had joined the board in their late thirties and early forties, but at that moment most were in their late fifties and older. He thus articulates the

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207 Letter, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 17 December 1951, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 305].
administrative desirability of appointing a young architect whose enthusiasm about the institution and likelihood to take his service seriously.  

This early divergence of perspectives—Roberts’ concern for the Academy’s vitality and public reputation, and the Board’s interest in institutional dedication and continuity—would resurface a few years later, when a disagreement over an architecture residency collided with a festering internal challenge to the postwar Academy’s new direction in the arts. Academy President J. K. Smith had written to Roberts recommending his friend Henry Toombs for an architecture residency:

He is an extraordinarily competent architect doing, in my opinion, the most interesting work in the Southeastern part of the country; conservative in background and training, making an interesting transition to modern trends…great friend of the Roosevelt family, for whom he did the Warm Springs Foundation and some work at Hyde Park; further details available in Who’s Who.

If you feel that a practising architect of his maturity and background fits your picture there you would, I am confident, have the unanimous support of the Committee on Fine Arts, by whom he is well known and respected.

But since we have set up the procedure that such recommendations should originate with you, I am referring the name to you, and advising Henry in accordance with the enclosed letter that I am doing so.

Toombs was a partner in the Atlanta firm of Toombs and Wells, and his firm would soon add Joseph Amisano, just returned from his architecture Fellowship at the Academy in 1951-52, to become Toombs, Amisano and Wells. Toombs had indeed produced a number of recent, modernizing projects in the Atlanta area, and his firm would receive considerable recognition for its work in the late 1950s-1960s. However, this recognition had not yet been bestowed, and unlike

209 Smith was also Cain’s boss at McKim, Mead and White (and Cain would later succeed him as firm president), but takes pains to respond to Roberts’ concerns in objective terms: “It was particularly important to me to try to discount my obvious interest in the man.” Letter, J. K. Smith to L. Roberts, 21 December 1951, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 310].
the more obscure residents of the 1950s, Toombs had neither prior association with the Academy or a prominent academic position to bolster his credentials.

This suggestion also came after Roberts already had arrangements for 1953-54 residencies well underway. If he had specific objections to Toombs’ suitability, they remained unspoken. He responded to Smith: “I would have been delighted to have considered Mr. Toombs for next year (I have met him several times in New York and thought him charming, and I have always heard the very best things of his work),” but reminded Smith that he had already invited Donald Oenslager, a member of the Yale faculty who would come unofficially, and Belluschi. He adds, “Both men have been on the panel for some time. Belluschi has since replied that he is interested,” so the Academy already had a “full house” of architects for the next year. He concludes the subject with: “However, should Mr. Toombs be able to wait, I should certainly like to keep his appointment in mind.”212 What remains unspoken is the possibility that Roberts believed that the participation of well-known architects in the Academy both as trustees and as residents provided more than “window dressing” for the Academy, and was crucial to maintaining its reputation for disciplinary relevance.

Roberts’ response did not please Smith, whose reply is tinged with one of very few hints of conflict in what is generally a highly cordial, respectful, and extensive professional correspondence between the two men. He prophecies darkly, “I sense that some stormy weather is ahead for the Academy Administration” (i.e., Roberts). Smith used this letter to convey a number of concerns, the first of which was the embarrassment of publishing magnate Henry Luce asking an unnamed Trustee about a report that Laurance and Isabel Roberts opposed his wife Clare Booth Luce’s appointment as Ambassador to Italy. Smith adds,

I have learned that some Trustees representing artistic philosophies with which they believe you have been unsympathetic, if not actually antagonistic, to the detriment of a truly liberal orientation of the Academy, are now meeting and organizing—perhaps a friendly, perhaps a very unfriendly opposition….But your letter explaining that you cannot accommodate an

212 Letter, L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 8 April 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1054].
architect of Henry Toombs’ stature and record of collaboration with painters, sculptors and landscape architects…is not going to make matters easier.\textsuperscript{213}

He thereby interweaves political anxiety at the outset of the incoming Eisenhower administration, rumblings of an internal rebellion against Roberts’ administration, and the Toombs rejection as fanning the flames of resentment (without suggesting that the resentment might be his own).

Roberts’ response to this rather threatening letter is impressively serene in tone. He reports that he had already spoken directly to the Trustee questioned by Luce, explaining that the remarks that reached his ears did not represent any personal opinions, but an account of stories in the Italian press reporting a general public objection to the appointment of a female U.S. Ambassador.\textsuperscript{214}

Roberts adds that he is “at a loss to account for” the gathering opposition, and notes how he had expressed regret about declining to appoint Toombs for the following year, reiterating that his main reason was the existence of prior commitments. He concludes by noting that all his decisions had been transparent and received official approval, and presents his record as Academy Director as his only defense:

Since every appointment and all policy have always been cleared through the Board it is rather difficult to see what the actual objections may be. Further, I can but say that the present reputation of the Academy both at home and abroad should be ample proof of my wholehearted attempt during these past six and a half years to establish a ‘truly liberal orientation.’\textsuperscript{215}

J. K. Smith had been a longstanding ally of the cause of artistic modernization at the Academy. He had responded to complaints from conservative sculptor and trustee Paul Manship in 1950 about the sort of non-traditional sculpture produced by fellows by defending the new policy of

\textsuperscript{213} Letter, J.K. Smith to L. Roberts, 15 April 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1056].

\textsuperscript{214} In a 1995 interview, Roberts describes Booth’s tenure as Ambassador as tense for the Academy. She was little involved with it, had rather cold personality (parties “unfroze” when she left), and a scandalous personal life: “It wasn’t funny though to have an ambassador as the butt of almost every joke in Rome.” Jewell Fenzi, “An Interview with Laurance and Isabel Roberts,” 17 May 1995, Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.

\textsuperscript{215} Letter L. Roberts to J.K. Smith, 22 April 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1057].
artistic freedom. He had also returned from a long illness to find all these issues awaiting his attention, noting in his next letter how “distressed” he was to re-read his April 15th letter and see its tone. Despite his changed frame of mind (“I feel calmer now…”), he lays out an explicit discussion of a broader internal conflict occasioned by the Academy’s new direction:

The issue which is developing…has to do with a fear that in trying to correct a pre-war intolerance for non-traditional work, we have gone to the other extreme and are fostering an atmosphere of intolerance for traditional work…. I am told informally that I have had the post-war support of the full Board, through personal loyalty to me; that now many members will no longer support me in approving administrative policies in which they do not conscientiously believe… It would be a mistake to think that they represent only a minority of the Board….A re-examination of policies at some stage was implied in all of our post-war experiments.

This clarifies that many of the policy changes that had redirected the Academy were only reluctantly agreed to by many of the trustees out of support for Smith, who had in turn placed much faith in Roberts. Smith’s mention of the Toombs appointment remains tinged with a hint of bitterness:

“Perhaps I was remiss in failing to tell you that no money was involved in Toombs’ case, because he is doing a military cemetery. From my point of view an important opportunity to leaven the run of architectural teachers and theorists had been lost.”

The conservative backlash ultimately resulted in a letter dated 28 May 1953, which trustee Michael Rapuano forwarded to Roberts in early July. The following January of 1954, Rapuano sent Smith the Fine Arts Committee’s official response to this letter, noting that the document had been sent by “nine friends and former Fellows of the American Academy in Rome”, and that the committee had met four times since (in the intervening September, December, and January) to decide how to address the concerns expressed therein. Rapuano magnanimously described these meetings as

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218 Letter, M. Rapuano to L. Roberts, 7 July 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1067].
an opportunity to weigh the policies and achievements of the Academy during the post-war years; and it regards the letter as vivid testimony of the love and interest which the Academy inspires in those who know it intimately, and of the importance of keeping in mind the purposes for which the Academy was founded as defined in the Charter.

He summarizes the complaints expressed and records the Fine Arts Committee’s responses to each. They include the “friends”’ belief that Rome Prize jury members should have experience in “monumental and collaborative work.” The committee’s response was that this was ideal, whenever those with such qualifications were available, but asserted that the jurors’ primary job was to assess applicants’ potential to benefit from Rome. As for the call to reinstate the age limit of thirty, they considered this too rigid, but agreed to make efforts to keep the fellows’ average age “as young as possible.” A call to re-institute the required collaborative problem was met with a promise to “encourage and foster” collaborative work, without reinstating specific required projects. To the request that fellowships in painting and sculpture be renamed “Mural Painting” and “Monumental Sculpture,” the committee stated that the Academy should let Rome itself encourage these artistic media, but that no such limits should be placed on the fellowships themselves. A final request that painting and sculpture Fellows be given additional minimum work requirements, which the committee agreed may be “desirable” and recommended being implemented in certain cases, evoked the broadest articulation of the Academy’s postwar policy: that “we endorse a policy of complete artistic freedom;” and that since fellows were explicitly chosen for their capacity for independent work, they should be given as much liberty to choose and pursue their chosen projects as possible.

Rapuano concludes by addressing President Smith and Director Roberts directly:

We believe that you, Sir, and the Director have brought the Academy to a position of eminence, both here and abroad, unsurpassed since its founding. We believe that this has been accomplished by following, not a restrictive course, but—far more difficult—a course of enlightened artistic liberalism. We believe that this course is wholly consonant with the ideals of the Founders.219

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This response, which was approved unanimously by Fine Arts Committee, is the last recorded word on the conflict.\textsuperscript{220} It appears designed to assuage the anxieties of those traditionalists who feared that the Academy had abandoned all loyalty to its prior artistic values, in ways that were both reassuring and noncommittal. In the wake of this internal conflict, Roberts continued to pursue residency appointments for the most prestigious modern architects and thinkers of the day. When no Saarinen or Mumford could come, he did not fall back on Henry Toombs, at least not for 1954-55, 1955-56, or 1956-57.\textsuperscript{221} While Roberts never discusses the problem directly, his preference to have no architect in residence (officially at least, in the case of Rogers), rather than accept one who would not augment the Academy’s reputation, may have been his way of maintaining a firm stand following the showdown with the trustees. He did finally bring in the obscure, if Princeton-affiliated, Comstock for 1957-58, but only after the Academy had spent two years without any senior architect in residence.

Not until the fall of 1958 would another well-known American architect accept an Academy residency: Nathaniel Owings, a founding partner of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), the U.S.’s largest and most corporate design firm, and thus a nationally recognized figure in the profession, if not a headline-making designer like Saarinen.\textsuperscript{222} Owings’ autobiography provides the single most direct, candid-sounding, and deeply personal account of an architect’s own motivations for accepting an Academy residency.\textsuperscript{223} Owings recalls that when he was about to complete his bachelor’s degree at Cornell, he received an offer from its dean, F. H. Bosworth, to stay on an additional year for further study, “possibly to be followed by two more years at the American

\textsuperscript{220} Roberts later said that had the policy reversals been enacted, both he and Smith would have resigned. He also credits a report by composer Randall Thompson (FAAR 1925, RAAR 1952) with writing a supportive, influential memorandum. “But it was rather tense.” Fenzi, “Interview with L. and I. Roberts,” Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.

\textsuperscript{221} Toombs is listed among the Academy’s “Notable Visitors” between 1959-64; \textit{Annual Report 1963-64}, p. 59.

\textsuperscript{222} For an introductory survey of this firm’s long, prolific history, see Nicholas Adams, \textit{Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: SOM Since 1936} (Milan: Electa, 2006).

\textsuperscript{223} Owings also had a direct professional connection with Belluschi: when Belluschi accepted the offer from MIT, he and Owings arranged for his Portland firm to be absorbed as a temporary branch of SOM’s San Francisco office known as B/SOM, an agreement that lasted from 1951-1956. See Clausen, \textit{Belluschi}, p. 194.
Academy in Rome. There was the slight matter of the competition, but with a twinkle in his eye he said this would be his year.\textsuperscript{224} Owings declined this invitation in order to support his mother and sister by working in New York, but claims that he had regretted this lost opportunity ever since. He describes his 1958 invitation from Michael Rapuano, a former Cornell classmate and the Academy’s new president that year following Smith’s retirement, as his chance to combine a personal and professional sabbatical and reclaim a lost opportunity and a long-deferred dream:

Since 1927 I had been hoping to finally fulfill my ambition of spending a year in residence at the academy. In the years since college I had been burning up native resources intellectually and spiritually and the time had come to recharge. It would be good to try putting down my roots into the rich culture of ancient Rome, even if it was for only a year.\textsuperscript{225}

Owings goes on to describe his motives in surprising, emotionally palliative terms: “I had never shaken my feeling of inferiority as a professional. I felt sincerely that only through full involvement in the American Academy in Rome could this block be removed.”\textsuperscript{226} Clearly, the notion that such an established, prominent figure would still feel that he lacked full credibility as an architect unless he had spent time in Italy was still widespread in 1958.

Coming from SOM’s most bluntly business-minded founding partner, this confession sounds peculiar and inconsistent with Owings’ hard-edged reputation. Yet he may well have been conscious of an unflattering contrast between his persona and those of colleagues Louis Skidmore and Gordon Bunshaft, who had both traveled extensively in Europe in their youth on Rotch Travelling Fellowships (1926-29 for Skidmore, 1935-37 for Bunshaft).\textsuperscript{227} Given the pervasive image of the ideal architect as a cultured, creative designer rather than a pragmatic corporate operator, Owings may have seen himself as lacking an important form of disciplinary legitimacy despite his

\textsuperscript{224} Owings, \textit{The Spaces in Between}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{225} While he laments his stay was “only a year,” he was probably there a few months at most. Jean Labatut is listed as the resident for the spring of 1959, and his papers show he was there at least between April and June of that year, delivering a presentation at a conference on May 30.
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{The Spaces in Between}, pp. 145-146.
\textsuperscript{227} Skidmore was also Owings’ brother-in-law (he met Owings’ sister while they were both studying in Paris), so Owings’ self-consciousness may have had a tinge of familial competition as well.
professional success. If so, the Academy’s invitation would have been an appealing way to acquire
his own direct knowledge of European culture, history, and monuments. Even its conservative
Beaux-Arts history, which the postwar institution had worked to leave behind, may have been part
of its appeal to him, providing a form of parity with the traditionally academic experiences that made
Owings feel inadequate.

Owings’ account of his reactions to Italy sound designed to counteract his hard-nosed, bottom-line professional reputation. He loftily recounts being inspired by the “classic values” of Rome, in particular the scale and ceremony of St. Peter’s during the funeral of Pope Pius XII and election of his successor, John XXIII in October of 1958. He describes himself as a rejuvenated, creative and pedagogical force at the Academy:

> In the soft Italian sunlight my native energy revived, and I felt strong enough to reintroduce collaborative problems at the academy for the first time after a lapse of forty years. The fellows in sculpture, painting and architecture agreed to try to combine their talents and enthusiastically went to work. One combined group undertook the design of a chapel supposedly for a rich American cardinal who had died in Rome; another group tackled a flea market—in reality a series of shops—which they designed like a ruin sprawled along the Tiber River.”

Owings’ statement is unconvincing, but intriguing. Its most obvious inaccuracy regards the collaborative problem, which did not end at the Academy in 1918 but continued until 1939, despite the considerable internal conflict it caused. Furthermore, collaborative design problems appear to have been at least an intended part of the postwar Academy long before Owings’ residency. As early as 1950, in an invitation letter to Kahn, Roberts states that a resident in architecture is expected “to act as advisor to the Fellows in architecture, to accompany them on occasional trips, and perhaps to supervise the collaborative exercise between architects, painters, and sculptors.” In addition, as mentioned above, when a group of architecture fellows requested that Ernesto Rogers be invited to come as a resident for 1954-55, they explicitly asked that he “direct them in a collaborative

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228 The Spaces in Between, 146-147.
229 Letter, L. Roberts to L. Kahn, 17 February 1950, Kahn Collection, AAUP.
This request may have been added knowingly to sweeten the deal with the Trustees, who had only a few months earlier dealt with requests that this be reinstated as a requirement. The report for 1957-58, the year before Owings came, also states that “the architects’ collaborative was in the hands of Professor Francis Comstock of Princeton.” That year’s project was described as a design for a building for the United States Information Agency (USIA) to be placed on one side of the Piazza Colonna in Rome, and it was noted that the fellows’ drawings and model were displayed in the Academy’s spring exhibition.

Since fellows were no longer required to carry out any prescribed design work while in Rome, a position that had just been confirmed by the Fine Arts Committee, participation in collaborative problems was likely voluntary, but encouraged. The language of Owings’ account, stating “the fellows in sculpture, painting and architecture agreed to try to combine their talents,” suggests that they did have the option to decline. Little record of any of these design projects has been preserved, with the exception of Venturi’s intriguing solution to Ernesto Rogers’ assigned problem (fig. 4.7-4.8).

Significantly, the notion of collaboration between different artistic disciplines was not only at the heart of the Academy’s own Beaux-Arts history and practice, but was a thread within modernist education as well, from the Bauhaus to Cranbrook to Yale. Several fellows had described the theme of the traditional “interrelation of the arts” as an important aspect of Italy’s attraction: they saw modern architecture’s Spartan asceticism as needing aesthetic

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231 This was such a diplomatically savvy addition to their request that it likely reflects Roberts’ advice.
232 Annual Report, American Academy in Rome, 1957-58, p. 23-25. The fact that this design was for an agency officially charged with promoting a positive cultural image of the US in Europe is significant. The relationship between the Academy and American’s overseas architectural programs and image will be discussed below.
233 Owings, Spaces in Between, p. 146.
234 See the Conclusions below and Martino Stierl, “In the Academy’s Garden,” for analysis of this project.
235 One of the most prominent uses of the term is the name of the partnership between Gropius and several GSD graduates, The Architects Collaborative (TAC). While the theme of collaboration primarily indicates a team of architects, and was meant to counter the myth of a single architect as building author, purposeful integration of works of visual art is very much in evidence in TAC projects such as the Harkness Graduate Commons at Harvard.
enrichment through (similarly modern, but carefully integrated) painting and sculpture. The Academy had chosen to underscore this theme in its Rome Prize brochure for 1954-55, noting that the fellow “has, through association with the other fellows at the Academy, the equally unique opportunity to see how the painting and sculpture of the present may be combined with architecture, to their mutual advantage.” This echoes the conservative sentiments expressed by sculptor Leo Friedlander in his 1952 essay defining the Academy’s contemporary educational role, in which he described current architecture as characterized by “a coldness caused by the absence of sculpture and mural decoration” and promoted the Academy as a source for corrective artistic collaboration. Rome’s abundant examples of Baroque Gesamtkunstwerk might arguably promote such integrative design as well. But this idea is also part of modernist thinking as well, in particular the influential philosophies of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, who continually stressed the interrelation of architecture and the other visual arts. The suggestions from the Academy’s “friends” also suggests that the collaborative problem was revived in the 1950s because of concern about fellows producing tangible results with their proposed projects. Those written by the architects do indeed often read as hazily defined or over-ambitious, but since the “friends” specifically mention painting and sculpture fellowships in three of their six requests, it is their productivity that apparently aroused greatest concern.

The mention of these works’ inclusion in the Academy’s annual exhibitions held each spring suggests possible internal pressure to produce more visible manifestations of the fellows’ work for an audience that became more official and prestigious during the 1950s. Attendance by the U.S. Ambassador and other dignitaries is increasingly mentioned, and the Academy is frequently

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236 See, e.g., the statements by Jova, Peterson, and Platner.
237 Brochure held in Kahn Collection, AAUP.
239 The sixth recommendation (not mentioned in the discussion above) was that fellowships in painting and sculpture be made for two years, with an option for a third, a request that was granted. Letter, M. Rapuano to J. K. Smith, 22 January 1954, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 352].
described as a surrogate embassy during this period.\textsuperscript{240} The \textit{Annual Report} for 1958-59 also mentions that the drawings produced for Owings’ collaborative problem were sent to the trustees in New York, giving at least the impression of official oversight and an emphasis on the Academy’s role in projecting the nation’s image to a diplomatically significant public audience.\textsuperscript{241} This institution was not merely an outpost through which American scholars and artists could absorb and transmit cultural knowledge back to the home country, but a means to broadcast a strategically significant picture of the nation’s identity during years fraught with Cold War tensions.\textsuperscript{242} The Academy’s complex web of relationships with prominent architects had an importance beyond questions internal to the discipline’s direction. While questions of individual career trajectories, artistic interests, and professional availability helped determine who came as residents, a significant number of these architects were and would soon be actively involved in constructing the U.S.’s official architectural image for its ongoing, worldwide propaganda efforts, raising many questions about the relation of these efforts to their institutional links to the Academy and the symbolic legacy of Rome.

**Monumentality and the Fascist Legacy**

Within Nathaniel Owings’ account of his Academy residency—among accounts of his supposedly pioneering “teaching,” amused anecdotes of Italian soldiers’ interest in American ladies’

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\textsuperscript{240} Owings describes Laurance and Isabel Roberts as “the unofficial American ambassadors to Italy,” who “with their native charm and conversation, made the academy the most popular center for Roman citizens as well as visiting dignitaries from America;” \textit{The Spaces in Between}, p. 146. James Jarrett (’57-59) echoes this assessment when he writes in 1978 that “During the time of Lawrence [sic] Roberts, the Academy, in fact, acted as a surrogate cultural century [sic] for the State Department.” Letter, Jarrett to Thomas R. Vreeland, Jr., 14 November 1978, Fellows Files: Jarrett, James A., 1957-59; AAR Archives. Against this, when challenged by Henry Luce for supposedly broadcasting personal politics from the Academy, Roberts downplayed its relationship with the Embassy: “The only Academy-Embassy relation which existed during the past six years has been that of our personal friendship with the two previous Ambassadors and an unofficial co-operation with the members of the cultural staff of the Embassy.” Letter, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 22 April 1953, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 1057].

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Annual Report, American Academy in Rome}, 1958-59, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{242} On the deployment of Abstract Expressionist painting for such purposes, see Serge Guilbaut’s \textit{How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
legs, and awed impressions of the “ancient medieval splendor” of papal funerals and elections—one element has the greatest ring of candor. Owings’ residency occurred during his ongoing work for San Francisco businessman James D. Zellerbach, a powerful client who also served as Eisenhower’s U.S. Ambassador to Italy from 1957-1960. When Owings went to Rome in the fall of 1958, SOM was designing the corporate headquarters for Zellerbach’s paper manufacturing company, the Crown Zellerbach building in San Francisco (ca. 1957-59; fig 3.19). While in Italy, Owings and Zellerbach had a specific artistic mission:

…J.D. [Ambassador Zellerbach] and I searched for large-scale sculpture, seeking a “noncontroversial” piece for the pavilion of his new Crown Zellerbach building. It soon became clear that no existing sculpture would fit and the task of choosing a new one would be delicate, involving both the ambassador and his wife. Then we discovered Mascherini [Mascherini], a Triestino living in that ancient seaport on the Adriatic. He worked in bronze with lines inspired by the Charioteer of Delphi. His work was fresh, contemporary, safe, with roots in the ancient culture.

Owings notes that Trieste, near the border with Communist Yugoslavia in Italy’s far northeast, was a strategic site at a time of ongoing border tensions between those two nations. His language describing the sort of sculpture they sought to adorn their new building’s lobby—one that would avoid controversy and be, in Owings’ words, “fresh, contemporary, safe, with roots in the ancient culture”—suggests what America’s corporate and governmental establishment might consider desirable in Italian art during the 1950s. Mascherini’s sculpture (entitled “Woman in Bronze”) depicts a female figure striding forward, and still stands in the building’s lobby (fig. 3.20).

Historically grounded through its material and formal allusions to classical tradition, its stylized

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243 Zellerbach succeeded the intriguing Clare Booth Luce. Journalist, playwright, former Republican congresswoman and wife of the Time-Life publishing empire’s head, she served as U.S. Ambassador to Italy from 1953-56 (despite her husband’s concern about rumors of opposition from the Roberts). Jane Loeffler has noted that coveted ambassadorships like Italy were reserved for top presidential campaign contributors during the Eisenhower years; see Architecture of Diplomacy, p. 134.

244 Owings, The Spaces in Between, pp. 145-46.

245 This artist, Marcello Mascherini, received only limited attention in the international arts press. His figure for the Crown Zellerbach lobby was never published, but other works were, such as “Reclining Woman” in the Venice Biennale of 1954, published in Britain’s Architectural Review 116 (September 1954): 190, and his “Nereide” in Art in America 47, no. 2 (Summer 1959): 122.
abstraction was highly conventional by late 1950s standards, and would have comfortably met a popular audience’s expectations for modern art in a public, commercial context. That two wealthy, powerful American professional men might put such an emphasis on “safety” in a sculpture is also a reminder of how high cultural and symbolic stakes could be at the height of the Cold War.246

Owings’ offhand description of the appeal of an obscure artist’s work aptly describes how many American architects would absorb and re-interpret Italian precedents during the late 1950s–1960s. The tepid modernist neoclassicism of projects like Lincoln Center attempts to bridge the elite and the popular by using rhetorical strategies similar to those at work in Mascherini’s sculpture: use of venerable, prestigious materials; legible referents to a respected tradition; and a limited, publicly acceptable degree of artistic modernity. Such concerns with making modernism symbolically effective and palatable for mass audiences echoes a longstanding architectural debate about whether and how it was possible to reconcile a new way of building with a very old architectural function: monumentality.

This debate had begun in 1937 with a provocative pronouncement by Lewis Mumford, the same critic who declined an invitation to the Academy in 1956. Decades earlier, he had written: “the very notion of a modern monument is a contradiction in terms: if it is a monument, it cannot be modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.” Mumford saw monumentality as the product of what he christened “death-oriented” civilizations, including “the classic civilizations of the world, up to our own, [which] have been oriented toward death and toward fixity.” In Mumford’s view, monuments are the result of attempts by the “rich and powerful” to create “static immortality…forgetful of the fact that stones which are deserted by life are even more hopeless than

246 One glimpse of the tense geopolitical context in which Fellows carried out their travels is the brief mention that architecture Fellow John Jay Stonehill (1959-1960) had gone “searching out the work of Alvar Aalto in remote parts of Finland and even crossing the Russian border;” Annual Report 1959-60, p. 15.
life unprotected by stones.” As Joan Ockman notes, Mumford’s essay was partly a reaction to the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris, where Boris Iofan and Albert Speer used stridently monumental forms in their overbearing pavilions for Stalin’s U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany (fig. 3.21). The charge of an intrinsic linkage between style, antidemocratic political ideologies, and legible symbolism would remain highly contentious; Ockman observes that the question of whether modern architecture was suited to monumental functions, and vice versa, would become “central to architectural debates of the 1940s and early 1950s, preoccupying CIAM at its first three meetings after the war and engaging a wide range of international protagonists.”

While the roots of this discussion among European modern architects go as early as World War I, its heyday in the anglophone world was during the decade from 1943-1952. In 1943 Sigfried Giedion, who had already included discussions of monumentality in his 1941 Space, Time and Architecture, was invited by the American Abstract Artists (AAA) to write on the subject, along with Fernand Léger and Josep Lluis Sert. The three eventually co-authored a single essay entitled ‘Nine Points on Monumentality.’ Because the AAA’s planned volume, whose primary theme was the collaboration between artists, painters, and sculptors, never materialized, this essay remained unpublished until 1956. However, Giedion presented many of its chief ideas a year later in his ‘The Need for a New Monumentality,” one of five essays in a section entitled “The Problem of a

While condemning what he termed the “pseudo-monumentality” of academic architecture, he argued that monuments fulfill an enduring human need to

…own symbols which reveal their inner life, their actions and their social conceptions. Every period has the impulse to create symbols in the form of monuments, which, according to the Latin meaning are “things that remind,” things to be transmitted to later generations. This demand for monumentality cannot, in the long run, be suppressed.

Thus, instead of Mumford’s position that monumentality is a characteristic of only a certain class of anti-progressive civilizations, Giedion frames this quality as a necessary response to human nature. His solution is to accept this as a legitimate function of buildings of a communitarian nature, and to seek expressions of architectural monumentality that are appropriate to changed cultural conditions.

The other contributors to this section supported Giedion’s basic assertion that the new architecture would have to find some way to satisfy an enduring need for monuments, but without necessarily offering clear solutions to how this might be accomplished. Philip Goodwin (co-designer with Edward Durrell Stone of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1937-39) surveyed various approaches to monument-making from recent decades, from Mount Rushmore to the Palace of the Soviets project crowned by a colossal Lenin, without making any direct design suggestions.

George Nelson, architect and editor of the Architectural Forum, observed modern architects’ apparent inability to go beyond the essentially negative aesthetic prescriptions of ascetic functionalism and produce structures whose primary role is symbolic—“to commemorate an event or express a belief rather than to satisfy some utilitarian requirement.” Nelson claims that modern architecture “will

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have to throw away its crutches [structure and function], move up to another plane, and express itself in another scale.”

Kahn’s much-discussed contribution to the debate from this volume emphasized what he considered the unexplored structural and expressive possibilities inherent in structural rationalism. He proposed loosely neo-Gothic structural forms of tubular steel whose openness and flexibility were meant to mirror the new cultural realities articulated by Mumford and Giedion. Kahn’s emphasis on integrating mural paintings, sculpture and landscape to create architectural monumentality echoes the theme of painter Ernest Fiene’s brief statement, which argues that the color and visual variety provided by these media is necessary to make the architecture “emotionally significant” to the public. Giedion’s essay had also emphasized the role of colorful, ephemeral spectacles as suitably “modern,” flexible, and popularly engaging forms of modern monumentality, citing in particular the fountain displays designed by Jean Labatut for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York.

The essays in Zucker’s volume were only one part of an extensive treatment of the subject. In 1948 a symposium on monumentality was held in London by the Architectural Review, and the topic also came up frequently in the Architectural Forum’s coverage of the new U.N. headquarters.

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257 Giedion and Labatut discussed the Fair in their extensive correspondence about monumentality between December 1943 and June 1944; Giedion also sent Labatut an early draft of the essay he wrote with Sert and Leger (which, as mentioned above, remained unpublished until 1956), and a reprint of the essay published in Zucker’s book; see their letters and essays in Box 5, Folder 5, Labatut Papers. Furthermore, Eero Saarinen and Edward Durrell Stone both sought Labatut’s advice about fountain designs for two major projects: Saarinen’s General Motors Technical Center and Stone’s U.S. Pavilion for the 1958 World Exposition in Brussels. See letter, E. Saarinen to J. Labatut, 31 October 1950, Box 9, Folder 10, and letter, E. D. Stone to J. Labatut, 2 May 1957, Box 10, Folder 1, Labatut Papers.
258 George Howe also contributed to the monumentality conversation in a 1944 article entitled “Monuments, Memorials and Modern Design—An Exchange of Letters” Magazine of Art 37 (October 1944): 202-207.
from 1950-52. In general, the participants in this extensive and complex debate articulated one of the two general positions laid out by Mumford and Giedion. They either argued that monumentality was an architectural quality that was intrinsically tied to obsolete or undesirable aesthetic or political values, and was thus fundamentally incompatible with modernity and freedom, or else that it represented a universal human and cultural need which, suitably defined, could be achieved by the new architecture in ways appropriate to democracy and the machine age. Swedish architect Gregor Paulsson, a participant in the 1948 symposium, echoed Mumford’s basic position that the notion that democracy and monumentality were inimical. At the same event, Walter Gropius’ brief remarks emphasized that the modern worldview was best expressed through qualities such as flexibility, growth, and change. Four years earlier, Elizabeth Mock had written that this topic was being “fervently discussed by everyone who believes in the art of architecture,” asserting that monumentality must not be rejected as an architectural goal, but find its own “democratic” expression against its traditional role symbolizing the “omnipotence of the state.”

Geopolitical events imposed a heavy ideological burden on what might otherwise have been a merely academic artistic discussion. Monumentality remained as tainted by association with threatening regimes in the early 1950s as it had been when Mumford wrote in the late 1930s. If anything, the advent of the atomic age only heightened the problematic resonance of physical permanence as an idea. The new position of the postwar U.S. as a superpower waging an amorphous global conflict with the Soviet Union permeated nearly all aspects of the nation’s military, diplomatic, and cultural endeavors. Within this context, questions of how architecture might convey a complex array of often opposing qualities—strength and stability, freedom and

openness, democracy and leadership—had genuine relevance and urgency. After World War II, the victorious U.S. relied increasingly on an ascendant generation of modern architects to design the sort of large-scale public, symbolic projects that had seldom come their way during the interwar years. Modern architecture evolved from an avant-garde movement primarily realized in private homes, projects for socialist governments in Europe, and American wartime experiments, to a design language called upon to express a new cultural establishment locked in a high-stakes battle for global dominance.

Part of the task of symbolizing Western democracy and capitalism through architecture would be carried out by private, rather than public clients. The glazed vertical slab for the U.N. Secretariat would become an architectural type more enduringly associated with corporate office towers, such as SOM's influential Lever House in New York by Gordon Bunshaft (1948-52). Other forms of private international building were deliberately intended to export American cultural and architectural ideas. When Texas businessman Conrad Hilton built his chain of international luxury hotels in the Middle East and Europe from 1949-1966, he with the explicit goal of both creating familiar, American-style comforts her citizens abroad, and fulfilling a much larger political agenda, as Hilton outlined in 1955:

> We mean these hotels as a challenge—not to the peoples who have so cordially welcomed us into their midst—but to the way of life preached by the Communist world. Each hotel spells out friendship between two nations, which is an alien word to those who try to reduce friends to slaves. To help fight that kind of thinking and that kind of living we are setting up our hotels of Hilton International Across The World.262

Most of the cities chosen to receive these evangelical simulacra of the American Way of Life were not only selected for their commercial feasibility, but often strategically located along the boundary between Communism and the West: Istanbul, Cairo, Athens, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and—significantly—Rome. Most of these international outposts of America employed a largely modernist

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architectural vocabulary, with careful inflections reflecting both each hotel’s location and the style’s domestic evolutions.²⁶³

If such private projects effectively embodied the increasing reach of American corporate capitalism, another set of buildings made the U.S. political presence around the world ever more literally manifest. The dozens of embassies, consulates, and other buildings constructed beginning in the late 1940s arguably carried even greater symbolic and political weight than even the most rhetorically intended of hotels. In her indispensable study of American diplomatic architecture, Jane Loeffler catalogs one hundred forty-one overseas structures designed between 1905-1997 for the U.S. State Department. Of these, seventy-seven buildings, over one-half of the total, were produced in the twenty-year period between 1946-1966.²⁶⁴ It is thus most appropriate that one of the few architectural designs produced during an Academy residency was part of this program: the project for a new U.S. Consulate building in Naples by George Howe, about whose delayed payment he complains in letters home from the Academy in 1949.

This project is one of only two known real-world architectural projects carried out at the Academy during this period. The other is the design for the American Military Cemetery at Anzio, on the coast just south of Rome (completed 1956). The project was a collaboration between Trustee and landscape architect Ralph Griswold, the architectural firm of Gugler, Kimball and Husted, in New York, and Paul Manship, sculptor, and Griswold reported carrying out some of the landscape work while staying at the Academy.²⁶⁵ Eric Gugler was an Academy Trustee, and his partner Richard A. Kimball would succeed Laurance Roberts as Academy Director from 1960-65. Griswold, Gugler and Manship were all members of the Academy’s aesthetic old guard, and their conservative, literally

²⁶³ See esp. Wharton’s specific discussions of Gordon Bunshaft’s Istanbul Hilton; Building the Cold War, pp. 13–38.
Neoclassical cemetery design is a clear throwback to its earlier days, and an impressive counterpoint to modern architecture then being promoted at the Academy.

Five surviving photographs of a model for a new consulate in Naples are held with Howe’s papers. Stern, who publishes two in his monograph, describes these images as the only remnant of his unbuilt proposal (figs. 3.9, 3.23–25).266 The summary account of the final, “less productive and more unhappy” decade of Howe’s life in Bruno Zevi’s obituary states that “after the war he came to Rome, he lived at the American Academy, made a project for the American Consulate at Naples which was not carried out….”267 However, Loeffler’s study includes the Naples consulate among her list of completed structures, with project dates of 1947-53. She also states that Howe worked in cooperation with Rome-based architect Mario De Renzi (1897-1967), who oversaw the building’s construction.268 Loeffler’s source is Leland King, the architect who had been Assistant Director of the State Department’s Foreign Buildings Office (FBO) projects from 1941-1952, and its Supervising Architect from 1952-53.269 King recalled that De Renzi’s contribution was confined to producing working drawings, which is consistent with a preserved set held by the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations (OBO) archives (signed “progetto esecutivo studio arch. de renzi”).270 The completion date of 1953 is also corroborated by OBO records.271 Since Howe departed for the U.S. in December of 1949, De Renzi’s office apparently managed this project through to its 1953 completion. There were many practical reasons for Howe to either collaborate with or bequeath the project to an Italian architect. Besides the obvious benefits of experience with the builders and

266 Stern, Howe, pp. 209-210. These photos are held in the George Howe Papers, Avery Archives.
270 This set of drawings, dated 1951, is held by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (hereafter “OBO”), the successor organization to the FBO. De Renzi’s designation as “executing architect” implies that his office supervised construction, but leaves ambiguous the question of creative authorship. The drawings state that the work was “progettato dall’ ing. Luigi Musso [designed by Luigi Musso, engineer].”
271 Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy, p. 57 (where De Renzi’s name is misspelled “di Renzi”). The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has confirmed that the government moved into the building on May 1 of 1953.
procedures involved, it was economically advantageous to the U.S. government to hire local architects for overseas projects, since they could be paid in devalued foreign currencies and using otherwise unrecoverable wartime credits.272

Unlike most of the other new diplomatic buildings that the FBO constructed between 1946-1966, the Naples Consulate received no mention in either the U.S. popular or architectural press.273 This exclusion of Naples from celebratory articles on the crop of other overseas diplomatic structures is not only curious, but it also leaves the authorship of the existing building uncertain.274 Assuming the photographed model represents a design by Howe, the possibility still exists that the Consulate as built was strictly the product of De Renzi’s firm. Given that Bruno Zevi declines to attribute this building to Howe in 1955, his model may have had little connection to the facility completed in 1953.

Closer examination reveals strong formal similarities between the model published by Stern and the current U.S. Consulate General headquarters in Naples, which has occupied the same building since 1953 (figs. 3.26-3.27).275 Both buildings consist of a large, six-story rectangular block with a smaller penthouse facing a palm-filled, balustraded hemicycle on the Piazza della Repubblica. Projecting from the rear of both buildings is a flat-roofed, one-storey wing adjacent to a walled court with an opening on the south side which suggests parking, shown on Howe’s model with miniature cars. The model also shows an even, rectangular array of vertical windows divided into three stacked panes on the main building block, with seventeen along on the building’s long façades and five along the width. The actual building has fewer windows on each level, with thirteen vertically.

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272 On the financial mechanisms behind the FBO expansion, see below.
274 The OBO is internally familiar with the consulate’s reputed link to Howe, but has never been able to attribute it formally to him.
275 Observations of the current structure were made by the author in 2009.
divided casements along the length and three along width, up to the fifth floor. This pattern changes on the sixth floor, where additional windows are inserted into what are solid interstitial spaces on the lower floors, resulting in five windows on the narrow side and twenty-five along the length of the building. In Howe’s model, the sixth-floor windows on the east side of the building are identical in number but twice as wide as the windows below. Directly above the main entrance void, three bays are left unglazed, indicating an open loggia for a small upper-level belvedere which, along with the enormous roof terrace, would have offered spectacular views of the Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius to the south and east. The sixth floor’s larger number of windows (which are also taller than those below, with a glazed transom pane above the casements) and starker detailing has a visual effect similar to the openness of Howe’s “crown.” However, instead of being restricted to the east façade, on the actual building, the more open window pattern wraps around the entire structure.

Despite such alterations in the actual building’s fenestration, it follows the overall massing and ordering of Howe’s model. Where the building departs most dramatically from the model is in its stylistic spirit: the modernist flavor of Howe’s design is utterly compromised by the building’s details. Given that both are rather conventional building blocks with punctured, apparently load-bearing walls, the model’s greater modernity lies in the subtle asymmetry of its cantilevered penthouse roof plane, the main entrance void placed below the open sixth-floor loggia, and what Stern describes as its “tautly pulled exterior skin.” In the building as realized, the main entrance on the left side of the piazza façade is mirrored by a second one of equal size on the right. The three-bay loggia envisioned by Howe is still present, but was shifted to the opposite side of the building, aligned above the right-side entrance. It thus no longer anchors a dominant, off-center vertical

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276 Howe had also received a commission in 1945 to design an Italian Campaign Memorial in Rome, but wrote in 1954 that since 1945 “nothing has been done.” Stern, Howe, p. 209.

277 In the present building, and most likely Howe’s design as well, the more open sixth floor expresses a change in function, since this level contains a private apartment for the Consul General. The current position of the open balcony
axis for the façade as in the original scheme, but becomes an inconspicuous exception to what is otherwise a perfectly symmetrical scheme. A second, shallower five-bay loggia was also added to the rear façade, centered one bay off the central axis (eleven bays to its left, nine to its right).

The unrelieved planar surfaces of Howe’s squat tower contrast with the one-story rear wing, which is lightly scored to denote four horizontal courses. The actual building’s exterior walls are clad in carefully dressed ashlar travertine, instead of the abstract white planes of Howe’s model, which suggest smooth concrete or stucco. As built, instead of contrasting surfaces and increased formal differentiation, the back wing and the main building’s ground floor are unified materially with a thicker layer of stone. Once this layer of cladding wraps around the taller volume, it becomes a slightly projecting “base” for the upper floors. Similarly profiled stone frames around both of the main entrance doors mark the scale of the one and a half-storey entrance void seen in Howe’s model, into which smaller (although still double-height) doors were inserted below a circular stone relief of the Great Seal. The elimination of the cantilevered roof canopy above the penthouse roof terrace, and the addition of other superficial elements—a projecting, classically-profiled cornice above the sixth floor, a stringcourse beneath the fifth-floor windows, and slightly projecting rectangular stone frames for windows on the middle four stories—turns what had already been a tentative compromise between modernity and tradition into a far more conservative, classicizing structure—a palazzo.

Despite these numerous departures in final design and surface detailing, it seems clear that the consulate as built did in fact retain much of the overall design partì seen in Howe’s model. Despite the many obvious changes to his scheme, and the fact that Howe was uninvolved in the overseas construction process while comfortably ensconced at Yale, he might have been expected to

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is adjacent to the kitchen and used in traditionally Italian fashion for practical purposes. Howe’s model shows it near the most public living and dining spaces and connected to the roof terrace with a spiral stair, suggesting less pragmatic use.
claim and publicize such a major international project. Likewise, the FBO, which granted building commissions to prominent American architects in the late 1940s and early 1950s in the explicit hope that their reputations would lend greater visibility and legitimacy to the State Department, chose not to capitalize on Howe’s considerable national visibility in this case. In contrast, the FBO had sought and received considerable publicity when Harrison and Abramovitz built U.S. Embassy buildings in Rio de Janeiro (1948-1952) and Havana (1950-52) on the heels of their high-visibility leadership on the United Nations in New York (fig. 3.28-3.29). These two buildings, along with others by SOM, Antonin Raymond, and Ralph Rapson, were published in three of the U.S.’s top architectural periodicals.

The embassies by Harrison and Abramovitz are not only Naples’ closest State Department contemporaries, but share a number of formal similarities with Howe’s design. Naples, Rio de Janeiro, and Havana are all simple, white stone-clad Corbusian slabs with a gridded array of windows rising above single-story ground-level volumes. In addition, both Naples and Rio de Janeiro placed belvederes and residential quarters on top of an office building. Such an arrangement was quite unusual and later found impractical for security reasons; while proposed at least once more, it was

278 Stern documents only two completed projects by Howe between 1947 and his death in 1955, a newspaper office and a television studio, both in Philadelphia; see Howe, p. 251. Zevi’s obituary claims that during Howe’s final two years in Philadelphia, “he had received important professional commissions, which he had turned over to friends;” Zevi, “George Howe—An Aristocratic Architect,” J.A.I.A. (October 1955): 179.
280 The Rio de Janeiro and Havana embassies were both clad in Italian travertine, received in partial payment from the Italian government for war-related debts. Such transfers of foreign property and materials as “credits” for wartime lend-lease played a significant role in FBO projects. See Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy, pp. 49-50, 62-68.
282 While the Architectural Forum article identifies Havana’s cladding as “travertine supplied by Italian government”, the OBO architect in charge of its recent renovation identifies it as a local limestone. Similarly, the cladding in Naples is a Campanian stone seen on many local buildings, with a similar but finer-grained texture and greyer color than the Roman variety. Only a few Fascist-era structures, such as those on the Piazza della Carità, appear to have used Roman stone.
283 In Naples, both the entire sixth floor and the smaller volume on the roof contain residential spaces: the sixth floor is a large, elegant apartment for the Consul General. A seventh floor penthouse (the smaller volume on the roof terrace) contains several much smaller rooms that have fulfilled a variety of functions.
not repeated in later projects.\textsuperscript{284} While Howe’s Naples tower has the squattest proportions and the lowest ratio of glazing to solid wall, his treatment of the upper story of the western façade as an open loggia reflects the top floor at Havana, and the hovering penthouse roof echoes that in Rio de Janeiro (minus its MoMA-esque circular openings). Furthermore, all three buildings closely echo the description of Charles Goodman’s unbuilt 1948 design for Reykjavik, Iceland, which King characterized as “the first truly modern building” for the FBO:

Goodman designed the embassy as a five-story tower perpendicular to a lower wing. The top floor of the tower was a glazed penthouse (intended as a residence) recessed slightly at one end and topped with a roof that was nothing more than a thin plane of concrete. Unlike those that preceded it, the building was asymmetrical.\textsuperscript{285}

This description sounds extremely similar to Howe’s design for Naples. While there is no way to determine who originated and who borrowed, Howe’s design is indisputably consistent with what the FBO was building in the early 1950s. The motif of a vertical tower juxtaposed with a low base volume would be repeated in a number of other projects in the next few years: by Rapson & van der Meulen in Stockholm (1951-54) and Copenhagen (1951-54) and by SOM’s Gordon Bunshaft in Frankfurt (1952-54) and Dusseldorf (1952-53). But this motif reflects the period’s single most influential early template for a “modern” office building: Bunshaft’s Lever House (1948-52), whose design had caused a sensation as soon as it was published, and which likely inspired all these structures.

Given its obvious connections to these contemporary, highly promoted FBO projects, why would the Naples Consulate receive so little publicity, and no formal attribution to Howe? The

\textsuperscript{284} The residential function of Naples’ penthouse seems to have varied from a luxurious apartment for the Consul General to smaller apartments for U.S. staff. One staffer in Naples recalls the new consul appointed in 1961 moving staff out of apartments in the consulate so they could be remade into a residence for the consul general. Charles Stuart Kennedy, Interview with William H. Lehfelt, April 29, 1994, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection. The top three floors of Rio de Janeiro had apartments for Marine guards. Loeffler notes that this arrangement posed difficult security issues, and that when a similar layout was proposed for a consulate in Palermo it was rejected. Architecture of Diplomacy, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{285} Loeffler, Building Diplomacy, p. 58. Another project that follows the formal lead of these designs is the embassy in Madrid (1952-1954); see fig. 23.
single most obvious explanation is its more conservative style. The works that were promoted most enthusiastically by the State Department were the most sleekly modernist in character. In fact, FBO buildings in Germany and Scandinavia were built in the even more radical (and ultimately controversial) Miesian style of glass-and-steel modernism. That style was being deployed as political rhetoric is evident from the first portion of the *Architectural Forum* article, which explicitly contrasts several new, modern U.S. diplomatic structures with stylistically conservative examples of Soviet architecture (fig. 3.30). While Howe’s model could have served such a use, photographs of the Naples consulate as built, with its classical cornice, symmetry, and traditional solidity, would hardly have provided the desired architectural, stylistic, and ideological contrast. If anything, including Naples would have undermined the very thrust of such articles, which deliberately conjoin the spread of American democracy and modern architecture.

Loeffler rightly observes that the Naples building marks a dramatic stylistic departure from Howe’s earlier works. Howe may have disowned its final incarnation to disassociate himself from a building that contradicted, even if only in its surface details, his two decades of commitment to modernism. However, even the more modernist design of Howe’s model appears more conservative in comparison to the works of his professional heyday. Howe’s most famous buildings date to the 1930s, most prominently the iconic PSFS building of 1929-32 with William Lescaze, the first fully International Style skyscraper built (fig. 1.5). His latest major work is the Fortune Rock house in Maine (1937-39), which translated the horizontality and cantilevers of Frank Lloyd Wright’s recent Fallingwater (and his traditional “pinwheel” plan) into a sleek, regionalist structure of horizontal wood siding, fieldstone, and slightly abstracted gable roofs (figs. 3.31).

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287 Loeffler states that “the building hardly resembles Howe’s work from this period.” She may not have known about the project model, since she does not cite Stern’s monograph, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, pp. 57.
However, Howe’s consulate design fits in quite comfortably with the few works he was involved with during the 1940s. Only three works are officially credited to Howe between 1942-47. One, the Carver Court housing project for the Federal Works Agency of 1942-43, was carried out while Howe was still officially in partnership with Oscar Stonorov and Louis Kahn. Since he had already taken up his bureaucratic position as Supervising Architect for the Public Buildings Administration, he likely participated little in its design. Two others that were built under his direct supervision were the Office of War Information and the PBA Residence Halls for Women in Washington, D.C., both built in 1942 in Washington, D.C. (figs. 3.32-33). The Women’s Dormitories are utilitarian, wood-framed structures laid out with a fully symmetrical site plan. Their modest modernism is limited to the overall horizontality of the extensive wings, flat roofs, and windows grouped in long banks (producing a ribbon window effect) and in Wrightian pairs at corners.\textsuperscript{288} The Office of War Information filled a trapezoidal site and is a solid, blocky two-story structure with light courts.\textsuperscript{289} This building too has a nearly-symmetrical layout, with two office wings flanking a higher “information lobby,” whose interior has a simple, vaguely streamlined dignity. The exteriors of the flat-roofed office wings are smooth surfaces pierced with even arrays of windows. The article’s author praises its “clean-cut, straightforward design” and expresses hopes that the wartime exigencies promoting simplicity will influence the capital’s conservative architectural tastes, which had only advanced as far as stripped classicism before World War II.\textsuperscript{290} Given that Howe’s position as Supervising Architect was primarily administrative position, it is unclear how much he might have been involved in such projects’ design. However, he certainly had to approve them; indeed, whatever amount of stylistic modernity they exhibit may well have been


due to his influence. The Naples consulate model by Howe is less formally monumental than the OWI Information Center attempts to be, but its spirit is not that far removed.

What is more problematic is the formal proximity of the consulate to much of Italy’s Fascist-era architecture. While the historicizing details of the built structure connect it to an enormous body of conservatively styled Italian construction from the 1930s, Howe’s original model also possesses formal connections to a different body of interwar buildings. Characterizing the model alone, Stern describes Howe’s design as:

> a hybrid form of stripped classicism and cubism reminiscent of northern Italian modernist work of the late 1930s, and of Eric Mendelsohn’s work in Israel….It seems more than likely that this design, never before published but well known to American architects traveling in Rome at the time, influenced the reshaping of modern design into neoclassical modes in the early 1950s. Aspects of Kahn’s AFL-CIO Medical Service Plan Building in Philadelphia and Johnson’s Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Port Chester are related to Howe’s project.291

Writing in the early 1970s as a major protagonist of the return to overt, unapologetic, and Rome-centered historic citations, it is not surprising that Stern should emphasize this design’s connections to Terragni, Kahn, Johnson, and “modernist neoclassicism.”292 However, both the historically-detailed design that was constructed under a Mussolini-favored architect, and the formal associations Stern discerns in Howe’s more abstract design raise an unexplored, more ideologically fraught question: the connections between Howe’s design, the “northern Italian modernist work of the 1930s,” and the Fascist regime under which it developed.

The professional background of De Renzi, the Rome-based architect who brought the project to completion, augments these apparent links between the Naples Consulate and Italian Rationalism. Only eleven years younger than Howe, De Renzi had produced a number of symbolically significant projects for the Fascist regime in the 1930s and early 1940s with Adalberto Libera. These include the temporary building façade for the Mostra della Rivoluziione Fascista

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292 Stern never mentions the built consulate, and was apparently unaware of its realization under De Renzi.
(Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution) at Rome’s Palazzo delle Esposizione in 1932, where 200,000 attendees passed between four 25-meter high stylized metal *fasci* (fig. 3.34) They repeated this lictoral motif on their Italian Pavilions for Chicago in 1933 and Brussels in 1935 (figs. 3.35-36). Libera and De Renzi also won the competition to design one of Rome’s four new post offices to serve the Aventine district (fig. 3.37). The clean white exterior of their U-shaped design is punctured by grids of office windows and woven diagonal openings at stairways. Although faced in travertine, Rome’s native limestone, this membrane-like surface is precisely the sort of “tautly pulled exterior skin” Stern so admired in Howe’s model. Mussolini had encouraged architects to use this stone as a veneer over concrete to signify *romanità*. Although the travertine used at Naples was local, not Roman, the monumental effect of a fully stone-clad exterior is far closer to Fascist-era buildings in Naples than others built in the postwar period.

Most of De Renzi’s work of the immediate postwar period is not traditionalist in flavor. His apartment building on via Venturi-via Tommasini (1949-51) in Rome, for instance, consists of unrelieved, abstract designs with nary a cornice to be seen (fig. 3.38). However, when building in Rome’s historic center during this same period he creates traditionally-styled structures, such as the office building in Rome in largo Toniolo (1950-52, fig. 3.39). The building’s tripartite façade, with (Roman) travertine-clad ground floors, squared-stone window frames, and the top floor Ionic-colonnaded loggia echoes elements found in the Naples building. De Renzi’s fluent use of both modernist abstraction and barely-modernized historicism makes it unclear whether the departures from Howe’s model were De Renzi’s own decision, concessions to the demands of local officials in Naples, or to requests by non-FBO State Department staff. The fact that the final building did not

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294 See Neri, *De Renzi*, pp. 156-57.
become an official part of either Howe’s very limited late-career oeuvre, or of De Renzi’s more prolific and stylistically varied postwar work, suggests that neither one was sufficiently pleased with the resulting building to wish to claim it as their own.

Yet the fact remains that Howe’s model, the hybrid building that was ultimately realized, and one of the architects involved all have clear connections to the architectural production and legacy of Fascist Italy at a time when the FBO was making concerted efforts to build an overtly progressive image for itself and the U.S. While the involvement of De Renzi might be dismissed as a necessary appeal to local expertise, and the conservative building details explained as a concession to the taste of local officials, the fact remains that, as Stern observed, even Howe’s original design has strong formal connections to Italian Rationalism. This is true of his other works of the 1940s, such as the Information Center: the oval geometry and the abstracted public dignity of its main lobby stand in close parallel to the interior of De Renzi and Libera’s Post Office (fig. 3.40). It is unclear how such architecture was viewed in the U.S. at this time. What repercussions might formal citations of recent Italian works, modern or classicizing, have had for American architects around 1950, and would such works have been considered “tainted” by association with a defeated and discredited regime?

The complex aesthetic and ideological relationships between architecture and Italy’s twenty-year Fascist regime have been under critical excavation for decades.\(^\text{296}\) One of the first retrospective discussions is found in Bruno Zevi’s 1950 history of modern architecture, in which he aligns avant-garde aesthetics with progressive political positions during the Fascist period, but this has not held up under later scrutiny.\(^\text{297}\) It was nearly impossible to practice architecture under Mussolini without being a member of the Partita Nazionale Fascista (PNF), and many of the most important architects


\(^{297}\) Zevi, *Storia dell’architettura moderna* (Turin: Einaudi, 1950), esp. pp. 209-14. This work has never been translated into English, so its immediate impact on American architectural opinion was likely minimal.
of this period were not only nominal party members, but enthusiastic participants in the Fascist revolution who were eager to put their skills in the service of what was seen as a forward-looking, reformatory force that would modernize the Italian economy and culture. Some architects, like Luigi Moretti (1907-1973) and Giuseppe Terragni (1904-1943), both among the most respected designers of their generation, were especially ardent in their support of the regime. Very few Italian architects demonstrated active political opposition as the PNF became increasingly imperialistic with the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-36, or even after its adoption of anti-Semitic laws and rhetoric in 1938. Mussolini did not politicize architectural style as clearly and vehemently as the Nazis, but instead supported various modes of architecture in flexible, often inconsistent ways, whose only rule was that they furthered his continued position of power. Thus, Fascist architecture cannot be defined strictly in terms of style, but in multiple ways: as all work produced during PNF rule from 1922-1943 (which might more properly be termed “Fascist-era” architecture); those buildings designed by party-affiliated architects (a designation that covers nearly everyone who was creatively active); or more strictly, through its political instrumentality in deliberately creating buildings for rhetorical purposes, most often to unify the notoriously fractured Italian populace through evocations of both a shared and glorious past and a vision of progress towards an even more glorious future.

Among the best-known and most overtly propagandistic sorts of structures are the imperial-scale projects in and around Rome managed by Marcello Piacentini. These projects, which include the Città Universitaria campus (1932-35), the vast Foro di Mussolini complex, and the complex for

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299 BBPR’s Milan office would become a base for the resistance during the German occupation after 1943. Ernesto Rogers, who was Jewish, was interned in Switzerland from 1943-45; Banfi and Belgiojoso were also interned for their resistance activities, and Banfi was exterminated by the Nazis at Mauthausen in 1945. On architects’ response to official anti-Semitism, see the discussion in Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*, pp. 569-597.
the planned, but never accomplished, Esposizione Universale di Roma of 1942 (“E’42,” now “EUR”; figs. 3.4, 3.41), were all executed in an abstracted neo-classicism. But other contexts produced very different designs, such as the Corbusian “Rationalism” (synonymous with the “modernism” of northern Europe) of the famous Casa del Fascio in Como by Terragni (1932-36), and the controversially modern S. Maria Novella train station in Florence by Giovanni Michelucci (1932-33), which Mussolini himself defended against criticism (figs. 3.42-43). An equally influential if less visible form of intervention was the “re-medievalizing” of sites in Tuscany such as San Gimignano and Cortona, exalting those cities’ proud eras as autonomous city-states. Like the policy of both displaying anew the ruins of Rome’s Imperial fora for a mass audience and overlaying them with streets and facilities for the new regime’s mass spectacles, references to past and future were designed to have both a geographically and historically situated aesthetic basis and maximum appeal for a national audience encouraged to identify with a broader “Italian” history through the modern media of film, radio and tourism.

Most of the architects working under and for the PNF survived the war, both personally and professionally, and would continue to constitute Italy’s architectural establishment for decades. If the U.S. government had in fact objected to working with an architect like De Renzi because of his past Fascist work, their alternatives were limited, since any experienced architect in Italy in the late 1940s would have necessarily come of age under Mussolini’s two decades in power, and could have only established a career by working on projects approved by the state. Prior to his role executing the Naples Consulate, De Renzi had already been given responsibility for remodeling and expanding the sixteenth- through nineteenth-century Palazzo Margherita in Rome from 1947–49 to serve as the

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301 Interestingly, when the Academy sought advice on a local architect to work with in early 1947 to remodel the Villa Aurelia, they asked the Embassy and were told it had no recommendation. They ended up working with Zevi, who had spent the war in the U.S. studying at the GSD. See letters, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 7 January 1947, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 888].

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U.S. Embassy Chancery in Rome—a project of far greater symbolic importance than Naples (fig. 3.44). Given his established working relationship with the FBO, De Renzi was likely a natural choice to assume work on the Naples Consulate after Howe left in 1949.

Despite the many practical reasons to engage an architect like De Renzi, the idea that any branch of the U.S. government would willingly entrust its official “home” in Italy to an author of a defeated enemy’s triumphal imagery remains problematic. Italy’s 1943 repudiation of Mussolini’s regime and subsequent German occupation inaugurated the nation’s shift in self-definition from Axis oppressor to embattled Ally, but the American memory of the Fascist threat would not vanish. It is possible that De Renzi’s official work for the PNF raised uncomfortable questions about the nexus between politics and symbolic form, contributed to the dearth of publicity for the Naples consulate. In one prominent instance in the late 1940s, public accusations of links to Fascist design were considered aesthetically and professionally dangerous. Soon after the 1948 announcement of Eero Saarinen’s winning design for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial competition, conservative landscape architect Gilmore Clarke wrote to competition juror William Wurster to protest that Saarinen’s colossal, stainless-steel-clad arch was eerily familiar to a equally colossal, aluminum-clad arch proposed by Adalberto Libera for EUR. Besides the accusation of architectural plagiarism, Clarke criticized the putative model’s symbolic suitability. He considered Saarinen’s design inappropriate because it was “similar in design to one originally created to glorify twenty years of Fascism in Italy”.

When Saarinen wrote to Howe reporting this accusation, he states that “I find there was a design for Mussolini’s Fair which, as a minor motif, used and arch in the shape of a half circle,”

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suggesting this is a new discovery for him. While Libera’s arch was a perfect semicircle, a number of period posters and photographs depict the arch from an angle, which gives it a parabolic profile (fig. 3.45). Whereas Clarke had called Libera’s enormous arch a “central element” in the EUR design, Saarinen dismissed as “a minor motif.” A few days later Saarinen wrote to juror William Wurster formally declaring that neither he nor anyone working with him had ever seen Libera’s arch. The designs for EUR, with the exception of a few individual buildings (such as Guerini, La Padula and Romano’s Palazzo della Civiltà Romana of 1937-42), had received only limited attention in the U.S. architectural press, making Saarinen’s assertion credible.

Whether or not he had been directly influenced by Libera, the fact remains that two projects for colossal, minimalist variants on the ancient triumphal arch—one celebrating Fascist Italy in 1938, the other memorializing Jeffersonian democracy in 1948—are separated by a mere decade. The formal parallels between “monumental modernism” of prewar Italy and postwar America undoubtedly reflect a fundamental similarity between their design priorities. Rationalist and Cold War architects were attempting to reconcile what they considered to be the core, universal principles defining architecture of enduring (and “monumental”) quality with a form of expression that would be considered modern and forward-looking. Both American capitalist democracy and Italian

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304 Letter, Saarinen to Howe, 26 Feb. 1948, cited in Stern, Howe, p. 207. Saarinen’s rebuttal to Howe also pointedly mentions that Clarke “had most to do with killing the Smithsonian,” referring to the competition-winning museum design he and his father Eero had produced in 1939 (for which Howe had been a juror), later squelched by opponents of modern design on the Washington Mall. He thus implies that Clarke’s charge of association with a Fascist precedent is an excuse to criticize a project to which he actually objects because of its modernity.
306 One photograph of the EUR site model showing Libera’s arch was included in an array published in the New York Times in 1938; see “Rome Plans a $200,000,000 World’s Fair for 1942,” NYT (July 24, 1938). With his practice based in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Saarinen may well have never seen it. The only published photos of the project model in a U.S. architectural journal (which does not show Libera’s arch) was Federal Architect 9 (April 1939): 26.
307 Giorgio Ciucci makes the important observation that the rhetorical use of the term “classical” by interwar Italian architects was often inversely proportional to their stylistic modernism: the more stylistically radical Rationalists were more likely to invoke this adjective to describe their designs, while the more formally monumental and historically
Fascists articulated a number of shared core values, such as patriotism, unity, militaristic strength, progress and tradition. Only the U.S. rhetoric of individual freedom over collectivism (fascist or communist) marks a substantive point of ideological division. Perhaps it is not so surprising that many of the architectural solutions to expressions of similar sets of values appear rather similar.

Apart from the accusations against Saarinen, there was very little open discussion about American architects’ views of “modern Italian” architecture during the late 1940s and 1950s. Writing retrospectively in 1993, Robert Venturi claims that in the mid-fifties, “believe me, you didn’t like architecture of the Fascist period, especially that alluding to historical forms, in that era of Modernism in its most strident phase.” Venturi’s phrasing suggests a blanket condemnation of all interwar work, although it leaves some room for the appreciation of the more modernist designs. Up until the end of the 1930s, U.S.-based periodicals had generally presented and discussed Italian architectural projects such as Terragni’s Casa del Fascio, as interesting regional variants on the Modern Movement. This selective attention dissolves into a general silence during the war years. After the end of World War II, the focus of architectural journalism on Italy shifts to the country’s contemporary scene. The first scholarly discussions of architecture from Italy’s Fascist era only appear in the early 1960s. The earliest is a 1961 *Art Journal* article by George Mras, professor of art history at Princeton, who considers the relationship between Fascist Italy’s politics and architecture. Mras’ thesis is that Fascism’s historical and cultural circumstances—a supreme dictator controlling a country with “a glorious tradition from the distant past and a recent period of stagnation and traditional designs promoted by Piacentini were never described as “classical,” but more “modern.” See Ciucci’s “Italian Architecture During the Fascist Period: The Many Souls of the Classical,” *The Harvard Architectural Review* 6 (1987): 76-87.  

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309 Main works published in English include G. E. Kidder Smith, *Italy Builds* (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1955), which presents structures from Italy’s distant past and postwar era, skipping the interwar years; Carlo Pagani’s *Architettura italiana oggi—Italy’s Architecture Today* (Milan: Hoepli, 1955) and Agnoldomenico Pica’s *Recent Italian Architecture* (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1959) both of which provide only very brief discussions of Rationalism before moving on to postwar works.
neglect”—should have resulted in a “comprehensive, coherent and powerful architecture style” in the service of totalitarianism. He then observes that this did not occur, and attributes the eclectic nature of Fascist-era architecture to its self-described “gypsy” politics, which supported a corresponding “mixture of conservative, progressive and compromise solutions” for its buildings. Carefully tracing parallel paths between the regime’s variable architecture and its changing political rhetoric, he ultimately concludes that “the style selected as the typical expression of Fascist ideals—a weak compromise between past and present—constituted, in a sense, the most appropriate expression of the eclectic theories of the dictatorial regime.” Mras writes in a highly detached tone, expressing no judgments of the stylistic and ideological phenomena he observes. His most normative statements concern the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, a structure which he argues resists easy categorization:

It expresses neither the dynamic nor static aspects of Fascism. Nor is it a synthesis of the two. Rather, it unfolds, de Chirico-like, the melancholy aspect of an enigma and suggests that beneath the professed inconsistency and eclecticism of the Fascist myth there lay nothing but an insubstantial dream.

This vague sense of nostalgia is not for Fascism’s political or architectural manifestations, but for a lost opportunity to realize an ideal of symbolically synthetic form. The rhetorical parallels he finds would certainly have been harder to discuss with similar detachment had the outcome of World War II been different, and EUR was not abandoned relic of a lost vision of a renewed Italian civilization, but the new symbolic center of a triumphant world capital.³¹⁰

Four years later Henry Millon takes a much harsher stance against not Fascist Italy’s architects, but its scholars of architectural history. Using far more politically engaged language, he states that:

concerning the extent of Italic or Latin (both words were used interchangeably) control, power, and influence from antiquity to the rise of the Fascist regime. Such evidence of previous Italic domination was used by the regime to argue the inevitability of Fascist expansion, to achieve what destiny had indicated belonged to Italic people.

Millon explicitly refutes the notion that Italy’s scholars were exempt from political responsibility for the imperialistic purposes to which their research was applied, and presents ample evidence for their ideological implication in Mussolini’s cultural and militaristic mission. As mentioned above, he saw a recent revival of Fascist aesthetics in works such as Lincoln Center, and presciently sensed the more sympathetic revisiting of 1930s Italian architecture which would indeed begin in the late 1960s. However, Millon also declares that, while he finds the abundant formal architectural analogies between Lincoln Center and EUR “depressing,” these are insignificant so long as the purposes for which these forms are deployed stand in clear ideological contrast.311

Certainly, the stripped classicism simultaneously deployed in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and New Deal America during the 1930s is one of many examples of disjunctions between architectural form and political message. But during the early 1960s, the same decade when Mras and Millon begin discussing, and others would begin re-assessing Fascist architecture, the relationship between American architectural practice and the built legacy of Rome appears to move closer. While Millon expresses his belief in the democratic purpose of Lincoln Center, the relationship between expression of American power, architecture, and Rome tightens. The architecture residents at the American Academy in Rome, many of whom occupied prominent positions binding the profession and its production of the nation’s architectural image abroad, would only reinforce this link.

311 Henry Millon, “The Role of History of Architecture in Fascist Italy,” *JSAH* 24, no. 1 (March 1965): 53-59. In this, his critique differs from those of Ebba Anderson and Ilse Reese Meissner, whose present Lincoln Center’s visual parallels to Fascist Rome as more ominous and disturbing in character; see pp. 6, 8 and n. 15 and 21 above.
The ’60s Academy and the New Establishment

At the close of the 1950s the American Academy saw two major changes in leadership: the retirement of James Kellum Smith from the presidency he had held since 1938, and the end of Laurance Roberts’ tenure as Director in 1959.112 Roberts’ successor was architect Richard Kimball (1900-97), a graduate of Yale’s pre-war program with a modest New York area practice, who would direct the Academy until 1965.113 Another change was that the Academy would have a greater number of residencies by prominent architects, in contrast to the previous decade. While educators Comstock and Labatut did each return as residents one time between 1959-1966 (Spring ’60 and Fall ’64, respectively), most of the names are far more familiar to historians: Americans Edward Durrell Stone (Fall 1959); Max Abramovitz (Spring 1961) and Edward Larrabee Barnes (Fall 1963; also on the Board of Trustees from 1963-78) along with Jacob Bakema (Spring 1964), and Aldo van Eyck (Spring 1966), both well-known architects from the Netherlands. Bakema is identified as “the first of the European artists and scholars in residence authorized by the Trustees,” and described as being a “stimulating advisor and critic.”114 Both Bakema and van Eyck were active in Team X, the organization that was both an offshoot from and an ardent critic of the CIAM legacy.115 Van Eyck, whose work and ideas are frequently compared to those of Louis Kahn, was apparently at the Academy twice during 1965-66. One source describes him as “Visiting Critic, American Academy,

112 The Robertses were given much personal credit for the Academy’s renewal. Classicist Otto Brendel wrote to them that “Only those who have known the Academy over the years can quite appreciate what you have done, and how wholesome and encouraging the change of climate was, intellectually speaking, which you brought about.” Christmas card, Otto and Maria Brendel to Laurance and Isabel Roberts, 1959, Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.
114 Annual Report 1963-64, p. 47-48. This suggests that Harrison and Abramovitz’s special fund to support international residencies was established around 1963. Bakema is described as leading trips around Rome and discussing his urban plan for Tel Aviv.
Rome, October-November 1965,” and he also led a conference on urban design at the Academy from March 21-30, 1966.316

Two additional architecture residents were neither similarly prominent figures nor Academy alumni, but they did hold positions of considerable professional power at the time. James M. Hunter, who came for five weeks during February and March of 1963, was identified as “Chairman of the AIA’s Committee on the Profession.” His recorded contribution to the Academy was that he “helped the Fellows in architecture and landscape architecture by discussing problems to be expected in their future practice.” With a career based in Boulder, Colorado, it is also noteworthy that he was also the only resident from these years from outside the northeastern U.S. The resident for the prior year, 1961-62, was Roy Larson, a Philadelphia architect who was a partner in Paul Cret’s successor firm (Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson, now H2L2). While association with the legacy of Cret, best known for his stripped classicism of the 1930s, would not have been particularly prestigious in the early 1960s, the Academy’s Annual Report for that year pointed out that Larson “was also an advisor to the Department of State on the construction of embassies,” and was deemed “an excellent influence on the seven fellows in architecture.”

In fact, the FBO’s embassy program was closely affiliated with a large number of the senior architects at the American Academy from 1947-1966. Howe’s work on the Naples Consulate design during his residency is perhaps the most literal link between the two, but there is considerable overlap between the group of architects commissioned by the FBO and those involved with the


Louis Kahn would design a U.S. Embassy for Luanda, Angola (1959-60, unbuilt); SOM (partners Owings and Bunshaft were both involved with the Academy) built consulates and embassies in Frankfurt (1952-54), Munich (1952-55), Stuttgart (1952-55), and Dusseldorf (1952-53). Edward Durrell Stone had just completed his famous U.S. Embassy in New Delhi (1954-59) at the time of his residency, while Harrison and Abramovitz built their embassies in Rio de Janeiro (1948-52) and Havana (1950-52) long before Harrison became a trustee in 1959 and Abramovitz became a resident in 1961. Barnes designed a U.S. consulate/residence facility in Tabriz, Iran (1958-65). Eero Saarinen built embassies in both Oslo, Norway (1955-59) and London (1956-60), and had also produced a design for Helsinki, Finland in 1954.

An additional architecture resident who did not design any overseas diplomatic facilities, but who also combined involvement with both the FBO and the Academy, is Pietro Belluschi. He became involved with the FBO building program at a critical juncture in its history. King insisted on modern design for diplomatic architecture in the late 1940s, just as the number of FBO projects began to mushroom between 1947-53. The program received much positive attention in the architectural press as a particularly visible showcase for modernism: Loeffler writes, “through these designs modern architecture became symbolically associated with the postwar effort to find new and better ways to represent American interests abroad.” In January of 1953, Eisenhower was inaugurated the first Republican president in twenty years and the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress as well as the White House. Soon thereafter the FBO, which had functioned as a

319 Correspondence between Smith and Roberts indicates that one architecture fellow, Walker Cain (1947-48), apparently hoped to do embassy work while based at the Academy like Howe. They ultimately chose to discourage this proposed use of the fellowship; see letters, L. Roberts to J. K. Smith, 7 June 1948, and J. K. Smith to L. Roberts, 14 June 1948, AAR Records, AAA [5759: 938, 943].
322 The FBO began thirty-eight construction projects between 1949-53, of which 21 went to private architecture firms chosen entirely at King’s discretion. Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, p. 58.
largely autonomous unit within the State Department with almost no legislative oversight, had to clarify its design policies and justify its work to Congress.\textsuperscript{323}

King’s adoption of modern architecture had already been unpopular with many career diplomats and State Department administrators, who would soon find congressional allies eager to hear their complaints.\textsuperscript{324} A House Special Subcommittee began investigating the German consulate program in February, and found the “so-called international type of architecture” to be too conspicuous, expensive to construct and maintain, that the style carried “negative associations,” and that it was not “American” enough. In July 1953 an Assistant Secretary of State specifically ordered King to switch the style of ongoing architecture projects to “Georgian” (and, inconsistently, pointed to the Vatican’s Italianate embassy in Washington, D.C. as an ideal type). King’s response to this request was to assert that “the modern ‘style’ is considered as well-established as any style of the past” as measured by institutional support, education, publishing, and design awards, that “the Department should conform to this world-wide contemporary trend, in which the United States is the undisputed leader, if its buildings are to be truly representative of the progressive and characteristic way of American life.” Although King would lose his position that summer in the shake up, there would be no return to historicism.\textsuperscript{325}

The primary response to criticisms of the FBO’s modern buildings was the establishment of an Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC; later the Architectural Advisory Panel, or AAP). This committee would consist of one career Foreign Service officer, representing the State Department, and three architects. This panel was given oversight over selection of architects for future projects.

\textsuperscript{323} This freedom came from two sources: first, political protection from key Truman-era politicians, and the fact that the FBO paid for property and construction not with appropriated funds, but “foreign credits,” war debts owed the U.S. from other countries. Uncollectible in dollars, these funds were recaptured through transfers of property, building materials, and fees to local builders in local currencies.

\textsuperscript{324} The U.S. Ambassador to Belgium refused to use his newly Knoll-furnished office in Brussels, and congressional visitors agreed that its “modernistic” furniture “lacked the dignity which might be expected.” Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy, p. 68.

and authority to supervise designs (which would be exercised only casually). While this panel would make certain aspects of the process more transparent by placing decisions in the hands of a committee rather than a single administrator, it effectively handed over an enormous amount of power to the architecture’s professional establishment. King’s successor sought advice on panel membership from the American Institute of Architects, who sent him to Ralph Walker, its past president from 1949-51. Walker, like Wallace K. Harrison, was a convert to modernism by way of Art Deco in the 1930s. He suggested its first slate of architects: one would be himself, and another would be the conservative Henry Shepley. His third suggestion would become the most influential member of the first AAC: Pietro Belluschi, who was appointed in 1954 (the same year as his Academy residency), and would serve until 1957.326

Belluschi would have a long-lasting impact on all future FBO projects in two significant ways. The first was through the FBO policy statement adopted in 1954, which Belluschi drafted. This built on an earlier FBO memorandum written by King’s successor, which emphasized that embassy buildings should be “distinguished,” reflect well on the U.S., increase goodwill, be appropriate to the building site and country, and be economical to build, operate and maintain. Belluschi’s statement added three additional goals to these: that projects should reflect local history, the “exploration of newness,” and “focus attention on the ‘American’ identity of the work.”327 Architecturally, this constitutes an interesting matrix of priorities for 1954. A call to contextualism was already present in the 1953 memo, but Belluschi explicitly includes consideration of historical traditions along with cultural and geographic specificity. His appeal to “newness,” a synonym for

326 Shepley was also an Academy trustee from 1939–62. Walker visited the Academy in late 1949, having asked Smith for the opportunity to meet with architecture fellows there during a Christmas visit to Rome, Athens and Cairo. Smith described Walker as “no particular friend of mine, or anybody on the Board. He has had periods of being very critical of the whole effort out there. On the other hand, he has mellowed a good deal in his opinions as he has matured, and his professional position, as well as his official one, is very powerful….If as a result of his stay he would come away actively enthusiastic about what the Academy is now trying to do, it would be one more area consolidated!” Letter, J. K. Smith to L. Roberts, 16 November 1949, 5759:972. Other proposed members for the AAC were John Root, George Howe and William Wurster. Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy, p. 123.
modernity, may have been chosen to assert design currency and innovation while sounding less polemical. Belluschi’s assertion that these quality, innovative, and contextual structures should also be visibly “American” is particularly significant. In part a restatement of the King’s earlier philosophy that diplomatic architecture should display the country’s “cultural achievements,” it is also an appeal to more overt forms of national symbolism. Ralph Rapson, who with John van der Meulen built highly-praised International Style FBO projects in Stockholm and Copenhagen (both 1951-54), and designed others for Oslo, Athens, and the Hague, stated that they conceived of their embassies as ordinary modern office building rather than “monumental statements,” and that their only symbolic goal was to architecturally convey that the U.S. was an “open, dynamic, and cooperative modern country.” Belluschi’s statement seems intended to encourage designs which communicate a similar sort of architectural message in less abstract forms.

This policy amounts to a restatement of the aesthetics and contextual obligations of modern architecture for popular consumption, one that mirrors the ongoing discussion within the discipline. In addition to the interests in history and context discussed in the previous chapter, the doctrine of Miesian purity was being challenged by heavier, more sculptural works in concrete associated with the New Brutalism by such varied figures as the venerable Le Corbusier, a mature but evolving Eero Saarinen, and the young and rising Paul Rudolph. Stone’s work had evolved into a classicizing modernism much like that found at Lincoln Center, and the Academy clearly welcomed the sort of discussion spurred by this project. In his letter of invitation to Abramovitz, Kimball asks him to bring some of his larger, recent projects, “possibly Lincoln Center,” to present to young architects at their occasional discussion fora, which “would give us admirable material for a couple of such

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328 They had also argued that glass buildings were “contextual” because their transparency and reflectivity did not compete with surrounding structures. Stockholm was especially popular with local Swedish architects, who called in an “architectural Marilyn Monroe,” and Sven Markelius called it “the best office building in Stockholm.” Loeffler, *Architecture of Democracy*, pp. 74-80.

329 British critic Reyner Banham would be among the earliest observers to synthesize these critiques into a new “movement” in his *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* (New York: Reinhold, 1966).
meetings. Belluschi, who had strongly critiqued the United Nations design, had long been an advocate of regionalist modernism, and had been given the opportunity to codify many of the increasing critiques of the International Style for the FBO. Along with his *credo* for State Department architecture, Belluschi also drafted a list of recommended architects for future FBO projects in a 1954 memo. Loeffler helpfully compares this to records of awarded projects, which shows that of the forty-two named by Belluschi, twenty-eight eventually received FBO commissions (although not all of these commissioned designs were built). It is noteworthy that that King, who had begun his career in Arizona before moving to the State Department, was a professional outsider with respect to the mainstream architectural profession. Belluschi, Walker and Shepley, despite their differences in background and stylistic allegiance, were professional insiders with either new or longstanding connections to the East Coast, Ivy League professional network. Because no explicit criteria were articulated to establish what qualifies architectural firms for State Department commissions, this list likely reflects the members’ general opinions of which architects had a record of high-quality work or appeared to be rising stars. Overall, the chief criterion seems to have been to bestow commissions architects whose reputations would provide the most beneficial associations for the FBO.

This is not to suggest any direct causality between involvement with the postwar Academy and receiving commissions from the FBO: Louis Kahn and Edward Durrell Stone are the only residents who also appear on Belluschi’s 1954 memo. The State Department projects by Howe, Harrison and Abramovitz, and SOM were already completed by this time, and negotiations with Stone for New Delhi had been under way since 1953. Other projects, such as Barnes’ Tabriz

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332 Their immediate successors on the FBO panel included former Academy trustee Edgar I. Williams (who had tried to “sell” the Academy in 1952; see chapter one), Eero Saarinen, William Wurster, and Lawrence Anderson (of MIT).
333 The design competition for the U.S. Embassy in London (won by Saarinen) was unusual.
consulate, would be assigned before the architect’s official Academy involvement. Saarinen’s only
direct Academy association was as a Notable Visitor, since he never took up his residency invitation.
The overlap between these groups of architects is most likely symptomatic of their shared status as prominent professionals producing recognized modern work. They appealed to both institutions for both objective and perceptual reasons: as top quality people to either produce good diplomatic architecture, or provide meaningful guidance and inspiration for young Academy fellows, and also to lend a bit of reflected glory onto the institutions with which they associated. As the provider of real-world architectural commissions with a great deal of symbolic importance and creative freedom, the reciprocal benefits conferred by the FBO would have been far greater than those of an Academy residency, whose primary value, other than the promise of a Roman sabbatical, remained that of association with an institution that had fought to remain part of the American architectural scene, but remained more peripheral than central. While Barnes’ commission for Tabriz would have made him a more desirable nominee to the Academy’s Board, it remains unclear whether his residency and trusteeship would have materially furthered his chances of obtaining other such commissions. The fact that with the exception of Howe, Kahn, and Owings’ autobiography, most monographic studies of the Academy-affiliated senior architects give their involvement little or no mention speaks to its perceived importance in their careers.

That said, the Academy was becoming a more intrinsically sufficient incentive for certain architecture residents. Richard Kimball’s letter inviting Max Abramovitz to come to Rome in January of 1961 (“because the new Fellows will be just about adjusted to their new life and it is also the time of year when there is apt to be less travelling going on”) offers only a $1000 travel honorarium and no other support (besides an apartment at the AAR) for both him and his wife—hardly more than the travel allowance given Howe thirteen years earlier. Kimball’s invitation characterizes the resident’s role as that of an informal guide: “The best relationship seems to be one
of fellow architects rather than anything that savors of the teacher and student.”

Abramovitz did indeed come to Rome in January for two months in the midst of his work on the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center, among other projects. He organized at least one trip dedicated to contemporary Italian architecture: “in Milan, the group was shown about by Italian architects and members of the faculty of architecture at the University of Milan. Special excursions were also conducted by architects Digano and Gio Ponti through buildings recently designed by them.”

Unlike the recorded activities of Stone, who led a group of design fellows to Sicily, and Barnes and his wife (who worked in Barnes’ firm and is helpfully identified as “also an architect”), who led a trip to Umbria and Tuscany, Abramovitz’ emphasis on exploring Milan’s active modern design scene stands out. By the mid-1960s, America’s modernist architectural establishment was fraying. Projects such as the reviled Pan Am building in New York (1958–63) by Belluschi and Gropius have since become emblems of the movement’s loss of legitimacy. The sort of classicizing modernism seen at Lincoln Center appears now to be an aesthetically insipid response to the project’s complex, deeply conflicting symbolic needs. Neil Levine has described this period as one in which “everyone seemed to be aware of the need to reach beyond the Modernist dogma of pure functional expression,” with no consensus on how to proceed. Neither the International Style nor any of the many late modernisms that followed its brief postwar heyday would find it easy to reconcile the demands of elite architecture and mass culture, high art and global power, as effectively as the ancient Roman empire or Baroque papacy had. But the travertine veneer found on so many American projects of this period—New York, Havana, La Jolla—suggests that Rome did

335 Other projects in his office from 1960-61 included the CIA Headquarters in Langley, VA and a law school for Columbia University’s East Campus; see J. Harwood and J. Parks, The Troubled Search: The Work of Max Abramovitz (New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, 2005).
336 The AAR Annual Report 1960-61, pp. 22-23. One of the buildings must have been Ponti’s famous Pirelli Tower (1950-56). The report also mentions that Gyorgy Kepes of MIT was a visitor during this time while on sabbatical leave.
indeed remain a potent, if superficially deployed, point of reference for many of the architects who lent their time and their names to the postwar Academy. Although the rationale for Rome’s continuing architectural relevance would be articulated in far more explicit and influential terms after 1966, its haunting presence is no less palpable in numerous official works of the previous two decades.
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Fig. 3.1: Arnold Newman, Architects with Lincoln Center Model (*Look* Magazine, 1960)

Fig. 3.2: Arnold Newman, Performing Artists with Lincoln Center Model (*Look* Magazine, 1960)
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Fig. 3.10: Louis Kahn, Temple of Apollo, Corinth, 1951

Fig. 3.11: Louis Kahn, Sketch of column capitals, Egypt, 1951 [McCarter, Kahn]
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Fig. 3.13: Spero Daltas in Greece, 1951 [Patton Collection, AAUP]
Fig. 3.14: Daltas, Sippel, Amisano and Kahn in Greece, 1951 [Patton Collection, AAUP]
Fig. 3.15: Louis Kahn at Temple of Apollo, Corinth, 1951 [Patton Collection, AAUP]

Fig. 3.16: Louis Kahn, Sketch of Temple of Apollo, Corinth, 1951
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Fig. 3.23: George Howe, Model, U.S. Consulate in Naples, ca. 1949 [Howe Papers, Avery]

Fig. 3.24: George Howe, Model, U.S. Consulate in Naples, ca. 1949 [Howe Papers, Avery]

Fig. 3.25: George Howe, Model, U.S. Consulate in Naples, ca. 1949 [Howe Papers, Avery]
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Fig. 3.26: U.S. Consulate, Naples, Italy [photo: author]
Fig. 3.28: Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1948-52 [Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy]

Fig. 3.29: Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy, Havana, Cuba, 1950-52 [Loeffler, Architecture of Diplomacy]
This, incidentally, is the story of one agency of the Government—the Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) of the Department of State—and its wise decision that the best US architecture and the best US architects should represent us abroad. In more than 50 embassies, consulates, information centers and staff quarters now under construction or completed in places as far apart as Manila and Tokyo, Helsinki and Rio, Berlin and Athens, the US is displaying to the rest of the world a colorful picture of a young, progressive and modern-minded America. The lesson will not be lost upon those who may have received a different impression from Soviet propaganda.

But this new crop of buildings is likely to be only the vanguard of a major "export drive" in American architecture. Before long, many a US corporation will be setting up headquarters overseas—like the Reader's Digest building in Tokyo (AF, Mar. '52), Ford's offices and plants in the Low Countries, US oil companies' structures on the Persian Gulf and US steel companies' towns on the Orient. And hand-in-hand with such private-enterprise expansion, American architecture will go technical assistance to many foreign countries in need of our building knowledge.

Like all sound commerce, in goods as well as ideas, will be no one-way street. The more architects go abroad to design and construct these buildings, the more clearly they will be brought in contact with good foreign architecture and building, and the more good ideas they can bring home with them. Undoubtedly there are things US architects, builders, and manufacturers of building materials can learn from abroad.

The questions raised by FBO's activities, there are not confined to the most obvious one—i.e., how the energetic young director, Lee King, managed to do an important and difficult job so very well—there are other questions relating to what US building can do for the rest of the world, what it can learn from the rest of the world, and what US architects and builders will do against when they work abroad. The story on these provides some of the answers.

Fig. 3.31: Howe, Fortune Rock, Maine, 1937-39 [Stern, Howe]

Fig. 114. Fortune Rock, from the south at high tide.

Fig. 115. Fortune Rock, the two-story connection between the upper wing and the living room.

Fig. 3.31: Howe, Fortune Rock, Maine, 1937-39 [Stern, Howe]
Fig. 3.32: G. Howe, Office of War Information, *Architectural Forum* 77 (1942).
Fig. 3.33: George Howe, Women’s Dormitories, Washington, D.C., *Architectural Record* 92 (July 1942): 42.
Fig. 3.34: Mario De Renzi and Adalberto Libera, Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, Rome, 1932 [Kirk, *Visions of Utopia*]

Fig. 3.35: Mario De Renzi and Adalberto Libera, Italian Pavilion, Century of Progress Exhibition, Chicago, 1933 [Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*]
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Fig. 3.37: Mario De Renzi and Adalberto Libera, Post Office on via Marmorata, Rome, 1933-35 [Etlin, Modernism in Italian Architecture]
Fig. 3.38: Mario De Renzi, Apartments on via Venturi-via Tommasini, Rome, 1949-51 [Neri, De Renzi]

Fig. 3.39: Mario De Renzi, Office on Largo Toniolo, Rome, 1950-52 [Neri, De Renzi]
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Fig. 3.41: Project model, Esposizione Universale di Roma, 1938 [Kirk, Visions of Utopia]
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Fig. 3.43: G. Terragni, Casa del Fascio, Como, Italy, 1933-36 [Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture*]
Fig. 3.44: G. Michelucci, Sta. Maria Novella Station, Florence, Italy, 1933-35 [Kirk, *Visions of Utopia*]

Fig. 3.45: Poster showing Adalberto Libera’s proposed EUR arch, ca. 1938 [Garofalo and Veresane, *Libera*]
Conclusions: Robert Venturi and 1966

For the first time, I feel confident now that I am ready to design & build a building—& oh, that is a satisfying feeling—and exciting.¹

Robert Venturi wrote these words to his parents in July 1956, just prior to returning home to Philadelphia at the close of his Rome Prize fellowship. This sentence encapsulates an ideal of what the Rome Prize should provide young architects like him—a bridge from the world of absorptive education to active practice, armed with the sort of creative “conviction” described by Edgar Williams two years before Venturi’s fellowship began.² In the Fall of 1966, ten years after his fellowship ended, Venturi would come back to the American Academy as its Architect in Residence. During the intervening decade he had made a professional leap from post-graduate study and office internship into independent practice and teaching at the University of Pennsylvania.³ As of 1966, Venturi had twenty-nine built projects to his name, two of which, the Guild House in Philadelphia (1961-66, fig. 4.1) and the house for his mother in Chestnut Hill (1959-64; fig. 4.2), received immediate professional and critical attention.⁴

This same year he also published his first major book, whose intellectual roots were already evident in his statements of purpose to the Academy. This work, Complexity and

Contradiction in Architecture, would contribute substantially to an altered perception of architectural modernism. Vincent Scully’s introduction to the first edition proclaimed it the most important architectural text since Le Corbusier’s Vers une architecture, a bold assertion that has proved stunningly accurate in the decades since. This book established Venturi as one of the late twentieth century’s most influential theoreticians, and also initiated Rome’s shift from a peripheral to a more central position in architectural discourse during the 1970s and 1980s. As the first postwar Fellow in architecture to achieve wide professional visibility, Venturi’s 1966 residency was a triumph for the new Academy, which would gain much reflected glory from his increasing success in future years.

In the introduction to a special issue of the Journal of Architectural Education entitled “1966—Forty Years After,” George Dodds and Kazys Varnelis assert that:

The year 1966 is a historical landmark, not only because it stands at the dawn of Late Capitalism and the beginning of Post-Fordist restructuring but it also marks the first flowering of a postmodernist epistemic and cultural regime that continues to shape our world.

1966 marks a time in which modernism’s relation to the past was similarly reconsidered….By the mid-1960s, modernism itself seemed an artifact….The year 1966 seems, in retrospect, a crucial moment when canonical modernism lost its continuous contemporaneity and became, for contemporary culture, the new “antiquity.”

The year 1966 thus provides the closing bracket for this study because both Venturi’s “gentle manifesto” and his return to the Academy mark a pivotal moment. The relationship between Rome and contemporary architectural practice would turn a decisive corner in that

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5 New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966. All page numbers that follow are taking from the original edition. The introduction to Complexity and Contradiction outlines its complex publication history. Although published in 1966, it was not widely distributed until 1967, although portions of the book had already been published in journals by 1966; e.g., Venturi, “Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,” Perspecta 9-10 (1965): 17-56.
6 Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). Another work that contributed substantially to this shift is Aldo Rossi’s L’architettura della città (Padova: Marsilio, 1966). Martino Stierli has stated that “In 1966 the direction of architectural discourse was changed” by these works, whose “simultaneity marked the climax of a crisis in architecture widely felt among a younger generation of theoreticians and practitioners.” Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden: Robert Venturi, the Grand Tour and the Revision of Modern Architecture,” AA Files 56 (2007): 43.
year, much as it had in 1947. Venturi’s architectural ideas, which proposed a more flexible modernist aesthetic embracing formal impurity and semiotic legibility, would also help define the terms of an evolving, increasingly heated debate about the relationship between architectural design and history. 1966 is also the year that Denise Scott Brown would take Venturi to Las Vegas for the first time, beginning their joint analysis of one of the most culturally and architecturally despised of American cities in terms directly informed by their distinct experiences of Rome.

Venturi’s continued, active, and very public involvement with the Academy since the 1950s would enduringly associate the institution with these debates, often receiving credit for launching the postmodern movement in architecture with which he remains identified. This close affiliation is evident in the speech Venturi gave upon his acceptance of architecture’s highest honor, the Pritzker Prize, in 1991. He gratefully acknowledged the many individuals and influences that shaped his career, including:

Rome, as I first saw that city that Sunday in August 1948, as I walked on air… discovering unimagined pedestrian spaces and richness of forms bathed in the “golden air of Rome.”

The American Academy in Rome, where as a Fellow within its community, headed by its easy and hospitable hosts, the director and his spouse, Laurence and Isabel Roberts, and by means of its location, I might exist every day in architectural heaven, and learn new lessons via Michelangelo, Borromini, Brasini, hill towns, and other historical mentors and places, and where I discovered the validity of Mannerism in art for our time, and from whose perspective as an expatriate I could better perceive my own country and the genius of its everyday phenomena, to see the Piazza Navona and ultimately Main Street.

8 Other events, such as the catastrophic Arno flood of November 4, 1966, which focused world attention and rescue efforts on the artistic patrimony of Florence, and the 1965 film adaptation of Irving Stone’s 1961 novel The Agony and the Ecstasy also renewed global interest in Italy’s cultural heritage.


Venturi’s emphasis on the enduring impact of his time in Italy, particularly his Academy stay, has been a recurrent theme throughout his career. That he has cited the creative influence of his Rome Prize fellowship for decades also fulfills a promise Venturi made to Academy President James Kellum Smith a few months after his return:

[I write] to express to you and the Board of Trustees my appreciation for the opportunities offered me by the Academy. I consider my associations there and my travels and discoveries made possible by the fellowship, the richest experiences of my life; if I shall be able to make any contribution in architecture, I shall credit an essential share of it to my experience in Italy at the Academy.

Venturi merits special attention in this study for one additional reason: he created one of the most extensive and informative first-hand accounts of any postwar architect’s Academy fellowship. A virtual diary of his experience has been preserved through the forty-nine letters to his parents that he wrote during his Academy stay and travels, between early February and late June of 1955, and from late December 1955 through early July 1956. These letters allow Venturi to serve as a case study, providing a snapshot of life at the Academy for an architecture Fellow in the early 1950s, while simultaneously offering direct insights into the experiences and perceptions of one of its greatest successes. This record reveals a young architect who was determined to not just passively permit, but to actively ensure that Rome and his fellowship would be important to his career, almost a self-fulfilling prophecy.

12 Venturi tellingly entitled an anthology of writings by himself and Denise Scott Brown *A View from the Campidoglio* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984) Rome has been an important shared point of reference for him and Scott Brown, who was also there during the early 1950s working in the office of Giuseppe Vaccaro. Stierli, “Interview with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown,” 3 January 2002, AAR Archives.
14 Martino Stierli’s discussion of Venturi’s Academy experience relies on many of the same archival sources and covers much of the same ground as my own analysis, although with a more monographic emphasis. See his excellent study, “In the Academy’s Garden,” pp. 42-55, and Robert Venturi’s “Photographs from the American Academy in Rome 1954-1956” in the same issue, pp. 56-63.
15 These letters are preserved with his papers in the VSB Collection, AAUP.
Among architects and architectural historians, Venturi's association with the postwar Academy has become second in familiarity only to that of Louis Kahn. Echoing its typical position as the fulcrum of Kahn's bifurcated career, Martino Stierli has recently argued that "Venturi's two-year tenure at the American Academy in the mid-1950s can...be shown to occupy the central episode in his intellectual biography."16 Venturi even appears to have modeled aspects of his Academy experience on Kahn's, in particular his trip to Egypt and Greece in the spring of 1955, which covered much of the same ground.17 They may have even stayed at the same hotel in Corinth on their respective trips, since the sketches and description found in Venturi's letter to his parents show locations similar to the slides taken by George Patton during Kahn's stay there (fig. 3.12). Venturi had a deep respect for Kahn, who had served on his thesis jury at Princeton in 1950, and refused a number of job offers upon his return from Rome, holding out for the chance to work in Kahn's office.18

Besides his desire to emulate Kahn, another likely reason why Venturi has ascribed so much importance to his fellowship is that he fought for it with particular persistence and vigor. He only won the Rome Prize in 1954 on his third attempt, and has preserved both his acceptance letter from the Academy and the congratulatory cablegram he received from his former employer Eero Saarinen on the occasion: "IF AT ONCE YOU DON'T SUCCEED TRY TRY AGAIN CONGRATULATIONS FROM EVERYBODY = EERO."19 Years

16 Stierli, "In the Academy's Garden," p. 54.
18 Venturi worked with Kahn for seven months, then taught under and with him at Penn. In late April of 1956 he wrote "About jobs: I have not heard from Lou Kahn; I wrote him, asking for one. I got another offer from Breuer in N.Y., O'Conner in N.Y., and through Bill Short, Ken Kassler in Princeton..." Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 23 April 1956, "Rome: notes: letters," VSB Collection, AAUP. Venturi even offers to send Kahn a check for $500.00 from the Academy to help sustain his precarious practice, "chicken feed since, with your weekly payroll, etc. you are working on a larger scale;" letter, Robert Venturi to Lou [Louis I. Kahn], 17 January 1955, "Rome: notes: letters," VSB Collection, AAUP.
19 Letter, Mary T. Williams to Robert Venturi, 24 February 1954, and cable, n.d., Eero Saarinen to Robert Venturi, "Rome: notes: letters," VSB Collection, AAUP. He also has retained his rejection letters from the two previous attempts, in 1952 and 1953: letters, Mary T. Williams to R. Venturi, 21 February 1952 and 20 February
later, Venturi claimed that he had resolved to go to the Academy soon after his first visit to Rome in the summer of 1948. A letter by Laurance Roberts suggests that Saarinen’s support was decisive in his eventual success; in reporting the jury’s decision to Academy President James K. Smith, Roberts described Venturi as “a Princeton boy who had applied twice before and who had the very highest recommendation from Saarinen.” Although Venturi has stated that Louis Kahn was a juror that year, and Stierli suggests that Kahn’s influence was decisive in his long-awaited victory, this conflicts with a list of the jurors for 1954 given by Roberts, which does not include Kahn.

Despite the relief and satisfaction that must have accompanied his hard-won award, a family crisis that coincided with Venturi’s fellowship would frame his entire experience. Venturi’s father became seriously ill just before the time of his planned departure, causing him to postpone his planned arrival in Rome by October 1, when the Academy’s year officially began. His papers contain a draft of his letter to Roberts in early October, when the other Fellows were already at the Academy:

I have delayed writing you until I could have something definite to report concerning my arrival. I still cannot state an exact date, but I think it can be before

1952. “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. At least one other Fellow during this period, Ronald Dirsmit (1958-60), also applied to the Academy three times before winning the Rome Prize in architecture. That Venturi annually celebrates his first day in Rome, August 8, 1948, suggests the significance he attaches to the city, as if he was creatively “reborn” through the city. Venturi, “Notes for a Lecture Celebrating the Centennial of the American Academy in Rome Delivered in Chicago,” in *Iconography and Electronics*, p. 48. He credits the Academy’s Mary Williams with encouraging his persistence.

21 Letter, Laurance Roberts to James Kellum Smith, 24 February 1954, 5759-1077-8, AAR Records, AAA. This letter also states that there were 23 applicants for the Rome Prize in architecture for that year.

October 30. My father’s condition has improved, but there still remain some pressing nursing problems, complicated by the fact that my mother herself, is a semi-invalid, which are to be solved.  

Venturi also informs Roberts that he intends to fly, a faster but more expensive option at a time when most transatlantic travel took place by ocean liner. He had arrived in Rome by early November, when Roberts describes Venturi to Smith as “just the right architect to have sent here.” However, less than two months later he made a return trip home at Christmas, which he mentions in a letter to Kahn written after his return in January. Venturi returned home for a second time in July 1955, and did not make it back to the Academy until December 30, five months later. Since Venturi’s fellowship ended in mid-July of 1956, this means it essentially consisted of one two-month and two six-month stays. His letters to his parents suggest he was deeply torn while abroad: they are saturated with a devoted only son’s concerns over his father’s precarious condition, and the effects of his illness and care on his elderly mother’s health and the family’s finances.

Thus, Venturi’s Rome Prize experience was particularly costly to him personally. Having already invested three years of effort and anticipation into obtaining a fellowship, it became a family-wide sacrifice for him to take up this long-awaited opportunity to immerse

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24 Letter, L. Roberts to James K. Smith, 2 November 1954, 5759-1091, AAR Records, AAA.
25 Letter, R. Venturi to Lou [Louis I. Kahn], 17 January 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. In this letter, Venturi mentions having just missed Anne Tyng, who had been living in Rome while pregnant with Kahn’s daughter, and also “Ernest Rogers, I also missed, but he will return. Evidently he visited every studio here & was very stimulating and admired.”
26 His last letter from the summer of 1955, written while traveling in Sweden, states that he was planning to return to Rome around July 12-15, “but will leave any time by air if needed.” Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 26 June 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. This is his last preserved note until that New Year’s eve, when he writes “I arrived last night around 10PM,” placing him back in Rome on Dec. 30 of 1955. Letter, Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 31 December 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP.
27 Venturi writes that he had arranged to fly home July 16-17, 1956, with a one-day stopover in Amsterdam. Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 21 June 1956, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP.
28 They also frequently mention the business and economic impact of his father’s health in asides written for his mother alone. Robert Venturi senior passed away in December of 1959. In addition to his architectural work, Venturi managed his father’s business until 1973, and he struggled to fulfill this responsibility while abroad. See D. Brownlee, “Form and Content,” in Out of the Ordinary, pp. 10-12.
himself in the sort of travel, study, and aesthetic absorption that he had dreamed of for years: “I think of you both very often & wish so much that for one thing you could share this experience of living surrounded by such beauty that still does not fail to astonish me every day.” Writing upon his return to the Academy after his five-month, mid-fellowship visit home, he expresses his deep investment in the difficult decision to go:

I do hope with all my heart that my experiences and my work will be really valuable and rich and rewarding, and will make the cost of my being here—in difficulties for you, and uneasiness for me and certain risk involving the business—worth it. I will try my best to make it worth it.

This and other similar statements (i.e., “I am having a wonderful and valuable time. I am very sure of this”) read as deliberate attempts to convince both himself and his parents of the importance of his fellowship. Having already written one of the most thoughtful and sophisticated meditations on Rome’s importance in his statement of purpose, both his letters to his parents and his final letter of thanks to the Academy convey an active, almost a priori determination that his experience would be meaningful and influential on his career as an architect.

Venturi’s letters constitute an important record of where and how he sought this meaning. They are many other things as well: affectionate, frequent, and often richly descriptive, especially on subjects he knew would interest and please his parents, like his visits to the Abruzzi and Puglia (the regions of origin for grandparents on both sides of his family), or return visits to places they had seen together in 1952. Their detail also provides a

32 See, e.g., the long, colorful account of his five-day trip to Abruzzo, including the city of Atessa where his paternal grandfather was born; letter, Robert Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 9 February 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. Venturi’s traveled alone on his first trip to Europe in 1948, but went to Italy with his parents in 1952. See Stierli, “Interview with Venturi and Scott Brown.”
sense of the structure of daily life at the Academy: his pleasure in practical errands that brought him down from the Janiculum into Rome proper, fostering intimacy with what he called his “piazza friends” as he savored the chance to “walk through the most beautiful urban spaces I have ever seen & hope to see, the alleys & vias and piazzas of medieval & Baroque Rome of that neighborhood [near the Pantheon].” He describes many leisurely \textit{plein air} lunches on the Piazza Navona, enjoying the famous Baroque juxtaposition of Bernini’s Fountain of the Four Rivers against Borromini’s façade for St. Agnese (fig 4.3).

Venturi’s letters also convey a sense of the relations between Fellows at the American Academy and their counterparts at other such institutions in Rome. He mentions several occasions when he and other Fellows interacted socially with other architects at the French Academy and British School at Rome. A few days after receiving an evening visit from architects from both institutions, he was part of a small group that paid a return call:

\begin{quote}
I met my architect colleagues around 12:30 at the Spanish stairs, walked over to the beautiful Villa Medici & French Academy & we visited the studios of one of the Prix de Rome men there, & saw some of his work. The room was beautiful with a Renaissance fresco frieze around the top & a fabulous view of the city below…
\end{quote}

While Venturi found the French Academy to be a very impressive environment, he had no praise for the work being carried out there:

\begin{quote}
[We] went to the annual exhibition at the French Academy of painting, sculpture and architecture. Naturally it was very very bad—but a great pleasure to walk thru the Villa Medici and gardens.
\end{quote}

After a lunch there the following year, he further describes what he perceives to be the very different artistic and social atmosphere within the Villa Medici’s “sumptuous” quarters:

\begin{quote}
34 He also mentions attending a party “in the courtyard of the British Academy;” Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 12 June 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP.
\end{quote}
…there is a much less serious, more sophomoric attitude than here at the American Academy; they throw food and things at each other at the table etc. Afterwards I had a look at [Olivier-Clement] Cacoub’s project (that is his name) and it was surprizingly [sic] to me, sound.\(^{37}\)

However impressed he might have been with Cacoub’s work, when he mentions attending the French Academy’s annual exhibition in early June his comment was “and did it stink.”\(^{38}\)

He was similarly unimpressed with the work at an Interacademy show at the Palazzo Venezia, which he called “horrible.”\(^{39}\)

Venturi also describes days spent reading in the Academy library in preparation for various travels. During his first spring he took a four-week long, Kahn-esque trip to Egypt and Greece.\(^{40}\) He later went to Sicily for about two weeks, and then accepted an invitation to visit Sweden as the guest of Carl Milles, the venerable Swedish sculptor associated with Eliel Saarinen and Cranbrook who had been at the Academy for a short time.\(^{41}\) The following year, during his second six-month stay, he took a five-week trip to Spain and Portugal and several short trips to southern (Naples, Calabria, Basilicata, and Puglia) and northern Italy (Turin and the Veneto), Switzerland, France (where he visited Le Corbusier’s just-completed chapel at Ronchamp); another to southern Germany, and the last trip of his fellowship, to Florence.\(^{42}\)

Although during his travels Venturi visited sites with architectural significance from almost every era—Etruscan tombs, Greek temples, medieval hill-towns, Byzantine churches, Renaissance villas—the enthusiasm for the Baroque expressed in his statement of purpose

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\(^{39}\) Letter, R. Venturi to R. and V. Venturi, 8 June 1956, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP.

\(^{40}\) The trip to Egypt and Greece included Giza, Aswan, Luxor, Karnak, Athens, Suirion, Olympia, Delphi, Eleusis, Corinth, and other sites.


\(^{42}\) Stierli discusses Venturi’s travel destinations and travel companions further in “In the Academy’s Garden.”
remains evident in his frequent, enthusiastic mention of monuments from this period in his letters. This interest—shared by many architects of his generation at the Academy, as seen in chapter two—was directly and deeply informed by Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*, which “was all the rage.” This book was, along with Le Corbusier’s “The Lessons of Rome” from *Towards a New Architecture* and the venerable Baedeker guide, one of his primary handbooks to the architectural meaning of Rome. Decades later, Venturi recalled that during the 1950s:

The relevance of Roman architecture for us then involved its spatial dimensions—space with a capital S—that was the word; you would not be caught dead referring to style—and symbolism was a word that had been forgotten in architecture.

We looked at two things:

First, civic Space—especially as manifest in piazzas—the space between buildings, as we called it: research into this kind of urbanism was fun as it could involve legitimately sitting in outdoor cafes in piazzas looking at leisure at architecture—and people.

Second, Baroque architecture—but not in terms of its form or symbol—not as style—but in terms of its complex and dynamic Space within its urban context: Sigfried Giedion oriented us architects toward this limited slice of history it was OK to acknowledge in this limited way.

Venturi’s final sentence makes it sound as though appreciation of the Baroque was slightly illicit, almost a guilty pleasure. Indeed, in addition to a general anti-historical bias, the Baroque era was still a few years from attaining greater the scholarly legitimacy it would enjoy after 1958. He also recalls that while at the Academy, this historical interest in the Baroque was nurtured by the residency of art historian Richard Krautheimer, one of the period’s most prominent scholars of Italian architecture:

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43 Stierli, “Interview with Venturi and Scott Brown.”
44 Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden,” p. 45.
I owe a particular debt to Professor Krautheimer who shared so generously and enthusiastically [sic] his vast knowledge of Baroque architecture in Rome and many other subjects.47 Although Krautheimer’s publications of the 1950s and 1960s explored the early Christian, medieval, and Renaissance eras, Venturi describes him as “a wonderful art historian here whose great enthusiasm is Roman Baroque architecture.”48 He took special pains to return from his travels in time to attend one of Krautheimer’s several informal lecture tours of Borromini’s work around the city, and during his trip to Bavaria he followed an itinerary of Baroque monuments provided by Krautheimer.49 While traveling in southern Italy, he was impressed by two Baroque sites in particular:

I drove back to Noto & spent the morning there. I believe I sent you a card from there. What a great experience to see an entirely Baroque town designed & executed all at once—in one stroke—with beautiful detail & golden masonry—consisting of a series of terraces with great ramps & stairs tumbling down a hill…

But before that, around 4 o’clock in the afternoon just over the border from Calabria we stopped at a little known Carthusian monastery at Padula—Baroque, built in the mid-18th century which if I may use the word, is fabulous. This order was suppressed in the very early 19th century. It is really an enormous palace, its main courtyard being ¼ of a mile square, containing very rich rooms & a great library & chapel & housing only about 20-30 monks! The climax and most interesting thing about it to an architect, besides its amazing vistas & lengthy arcades, is a great staircase, very daring & dynamic structurally & spatially—the quintessence of Baroque.50

Immense scale, axial views, spatial dynamism—the qualities that Venturi celebrates are all aspects of the Baroque that would become central to its canonical definition. A few years later the harmonious architecture and urban spaces of Noto would receive an extended

cinematic presentation in Antonioni’s *L’Avventura* (1960), but Venturi’s pursuit of such locations predated their more widespread popularity, and was most likely informed by Giedion and Krautheimer.

Venturi’s reception of the Baroque was also influenced by his extended residence in Rome, which provided the opportunity to experience directly, fully, and repeatedly the sensory theatricality for which many such environments were designed. Venturi’s detailed account of a beatification ceremony at St. Peter’s compared its dramatic staging with more contemporary forms of popular entertainment:

The basilica was crowded with people & the ceremony involved in a great way the art of display—Baroque display with the most theatric lighting and musical fanfare etc. And it makes you realize that Baroque interiors were made to be seen in connection with ceremony—music—lighting which is certainly second not even to Barnum & Bailey or probably Ziegfeld. The pope’s entrance was the great climax heralded by a magnificent fanfare (not disimilar [sic] to the entrance of the elephants at the circus)—(but then the circus is a Baroque development).

The Easter Triduum in Rome was another occasion when Venturi was impressed by Baroque churches “in action,” in particular the dramatic ceremonies of the Easter Vigil:

The Saturday evening before Easter is a big one for the churches here, from about 8 o’clock on. We visited St. Peters, Santa Maria Maggiore, S. Giovanni in Laterano, S. Maria in Aracoeli, Il Gesu, and St. Peters again. So you see we got a good number of points marked up for us up there that night. The ceremonies in St. Peters and St Giovanni were the most impressive. The one in St. Peters was earlier so you could see both. St. Peters when it is fully lighted as it only is on important occasions is a theatrical sight that ‘can be beat’ no where in the world I imagine. The Baroque period was the one in which opera and circuses developed, and the ritual of this period which is now used by the church still combined with the architecture is a trully [sic] overpowering sight, and magnificent [sic] combination of the arts. In St. Giovanni for instance in the beautiful basilica nave by Borromini for this evening, you enter and find almost complete darkness. Then a long procession appears with the cardinal at the end in complete silence without music. They walk to the western front of the church where there is a brazure [sic] with a fire burning. The cardinal blesses the fire and from that fire every one receives light for his candle (you have in the meantime been handed a candle) so that the bottom of the church is ablaze with all of these twinkling lights. The procession then moves to the alter [sic] front of the church where water is blessed and gradually all the lights of the church are lit (Broadway lighting experts could not do it more theatrically) and then music is

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added to the chanting. All this time you are being overcome by incense also. At the climax of all this visual and sensual delight if Bishop Sheen [an American Catholic television personality] appeared he could make many converts from the Protestants present. At midnight bells ring and horns blow like New Year’s Eve. This occurred on St. Peter’s piazza.52

Venturi absorbs sacred ceremonies and spaces precisely like a spectator at a show. His repeated use of metaphors drawn from the most theatrical of American cultural experiences—Broadway, grand opera, television, the circus—to describe his reception of the sensually exuberant drama of the papal Easter ceremonies suggests they appeared novel and overwhelming to him. Venturi’s personal relationship with traditional Catholic liturgy must have been marked by both a sense of identification and of cultural distance: an Italian-American through both parents, the Catholicism he saw on display was part of his own cultural heritage. But his mother had converted to Protestantism—the Society of Friends, to be precise, so he would have been most familiar with the extreme aesthetic austerity of the Quakers’ egalitarian, anti-liturgical religious tradition. In light of his later interests, Venturi’s spectatorial fascination with the visual drama of Catholic Baroque sensory overload, experienced through procession and movement, reads as deeply prophetic of his later analyses of the bright lights, raucous excesses and automotive staging of Las Vegas.

Other phenomenal, full-bodied experiences of Rome’s architecture included the chance to ascend the dome of the Pantheon, which he photographed and sketched in his letter describing the experience (figs. 4.4-4.6):

Because you are right in the center of Rome, the intimate views are wonderful and peering down the hole of the dome was very scary (someone held onto your ankles), it was very impressive—and as someone said it gives you a respect for Roman size. The organ was being played & it was rather funny to hear music floating up thru the oculus in the dome.53

One of the Academy’s many perquisites was its ability to gain *entrées* to such restricted sites and experiences, unavailable to independent travelers. Another mentioned by Venturi was a visit the not-yet-restored Villa Albani, “owned by & still sometimes inhabited by the Torlonia family—still rich & reactionary, & not cooperative about letting people see their collections; we were lucky to get in.” Built for the eighteenth-century cardinal’s collection of ancient sculpture (famously curated by Johann Winckelmann), Venturi commented on the divergent ways in which neoclassical architecture and modern architecture were designed to accommodate and display art. He and the other Fellows were also able to visit the Palazzo Pamphilij on the Piazza Navona, then (as now) serving as the Brazilian embassy. Special permission to explore the ongoing excavations underneath St. Peter’s basilica provided a uniquely tangible encounter with multilayered, historically imbricated structure of the church, a microcosm of Rome itself:

> What is fascinating for an architect is the rich hodge podge of things underground; you walk down a Roman cemetery [sic] & above instead of the sky is the reinforced concrete slab which the modern excavators have erected, and you realize that that is the floor of a crypt, and above that is the fabulous Baroque structure of St. Peters. You pass enormous brick structures which are pointed out as the supports of Bernini’s Baldachino [sic], or Michelangelo’s piers. You go through tunnels & passages that you can hardly squeeze through. Or you look through a hole in the roof of the cript [sic] & you see through a grill a few hundred feet up the dome. It is amazing to think that under this enormous church structure are all these intricate passages & rich remains. It is of course archeologically interesting & very important as well as Romantic....

While some of these experiences could be replicated today, others were unique to Italy of the 1950s, such as hearing Maria Callas perform as Lucia at the San Carlo opera house in Naples, or spotting the young Sophia Loren in the Forum Romanum and photographing her.

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“ample curves against the austere background of the ruins of Rome.”

In some cases, the mid-century realities Venturi witnesses are more surreal, if no less suggestively cinematic, such as a grand, abandoned villa outside Palermo housing impoverished Sicilian squatters:

...we stopped in the town of Bagheria a town with some great 18th c. villas of the Palermese aristocracy, many in a very ruined state now. The Villa Palagonia is the greatest example of a Rococco [sic] villa with a square ballroom covered with marble & mirrors. The ceiling is all mirrors—now in a ruined state covered with dust, spider webs [sic] & inhabited by many of the most poverty-stricken people—a country tenement. But very Romantic—a good setting for a Tenessee [sic] Williams play.

This contrast between modern squalor and faded grandeur indeed recalls Williams’ theatrical meditations on the American South of the 1940s and ’50s, and shows the extent to which Venturi absorbed Italy through the lens of his own culture. But his experiences were also connected to the contemporary realities of Italy’s postwar architecture scene. He and his fellow Rome Prize architects attended a number of lectures given by Italian architects organized by Bruno Zevi and the Fulbright commission. Speakers included both established professionals who had navigated the transition from Fascist-era to postwar practice, such as Adalberto Libera, Luigi Moretti, Ludovico Quaroni, Ignazio Gardella, and Giovanni Michelucci, as well as a younger generation of emerging professionals like Giancarlo de Carlo.

While less frequent than his comments on historic monuments, Venturi’s letters make occasional mention of the modern architecture he observes in Italy. He has high praise in particular for the monument to the Fosse Ardeatine martyrs outside Rome by Mario Fiorentini and Giuseppe Perugini (1946-48), and Franco Albini’s recent minimalist interior renovation of the Palazzo Bianco in Genoa, which displayed Renaissance

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59 Venturi’s papers include seventeen letters announcing these lectures, held between 18 November 1954 and 14 May 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP.
painting within a highly abstract but visually dramatic environment. His choice of destinations and comments also show him to be well-informed on issues, such as Quaroni’s efforts to create new forms of housing for people still dwelling in caves in Matera in Basilicata.

Attendance at the Fulbright lectures no doubt furthered Venturi’s awareness of contemporary Italian architectural issues. But his most direct link to Italy’s lively postwar professional scene was Ernesto Rogers, one of its most internationally prominent protagonists. As discussed in chapter three, Rogers was the only established practicing architect with whom Venturi interacted regularly during his stay at the Academy. His firm’s attempts to reconcile historically and semiotically legible form with architectural modernity would embroil him in a famous debate with Reyner Banham a few years later. In contrast to his readiness to credit the influence of Italy’s historic architecture and urbanism on his work, Venturi has recently downplayed Rogers’ role: “Ernesto Rogers visited the Academy a few times during my period there and was an official resident, but hardly showed up.” This dismissive account differs from his mention of him to President Smith: “I owe a particular debt to Ernesto Rogers there, for his friendship and his introduction to the best of current Italian architecture…” It is also somewhat inconsistent with his comments about Rogers in

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60 For the Fosse Ardeatine and Albini’s Palazzo Bianco interior, see Kirk, *Visions of Utopia*, pp. 146-47, 178-80. Ernesto Rogers’ firm BBPR would use a similar juxtaposition between abstractly modernist museum displays for historic artworks in their restoration of the Castello Sforzesco in Milan from 1954-56.


64 Letter, Robert Venturi to James Kellum Smith, 14 October 1956, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. In an introduction to the second edition of *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 14, Venturi again credits the influence of Krautheimer’s insights into the Roman Baroque during his fellowship.
his letters, which convey respect and enjoyment in working with him: “Ernesto Rogers is still here and still seems to be an impressive & very sincere man & we are all having a nice association with him I think.”\(^{65}\) Venturi was especially gratified by Rogers’ interest in an article that he submitted to the London-based *Architectural Review* during his first year at the Academy, although it was not published in either the *Review* or Rogers’ journal, *Casabella-Continuità*.\(^{66}\)

Stierli argues that, despite the fact that Venturi “has never accorded contemporary Italian architecture more than a marginal role in the genesis of his architectural thinking,” Rogers did in fact serve as “both mentor and guide” to him while at the Academy.\(^{67}\)

Certainly, Rogers would have discussed the heated Italian debates of these years with the fellows in design. His own philosophy had more than a passing similarity to Venturi’s later theories: never a rejection of modernism itself, but as Stierli puts it, a “re-examination of its very aims,” especially regarding the relationships between modern design and historical context, high style and popular taste, housing and the city (fig. 3.18). Stierli demonstrates how many of the ideas that would coalesce into Venturi’s theories of architectural post-modernism were likely heavily influenced not just by his absorption of Italy’s more historically distant architecture, but by issues and debates being discussed and put into practice by postwar Italian architects, and posits Venturi’s Academy experience as a “missing link” between this movement and postmodernism.

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\(^{66}\) Letters, R. Venturi to Robert and Vanna Venturi, 21 and 26 February 1955; 2 and 8 May 1955, “Rome: notes: letters,” VSB Collection, AAUP. The *Architectural Review* had already published Venturi’s first article, based on his master’s thesis at Princeton (R. Venturi, “The Campidoglio: A Case Study,” *Architectural Review* 113 (May 1953): 333-34). Venturi never discusses the subject of this article with his parents, but it was likely an early attempt to formulate the theoretical ideas that would crystallize into *Complexity and Contradiction*, the bulk of which was written while he held a Graham Fellowship in 1962.

\(^{67}\) Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden,” p. 49.
In particular, the question of how memory and context should inflect modern buildings is evident in the design project Venturi produced under Rogers’ guidance. The proposal for new studios in the Academy gardens, his only known design project during his stay, was exhibited at the Academy’s annual exhibition in late May of 1955 (figs. 4.7-4.8). Venturi’s design proposed a two-story rectangular bank of studios pushed against the far Western wall of the Academy garden, with a raised berm hiding the lower level and camouflaging its scale. Although the building’s location and massing are calculated to make the insertion unobtrusive, Venturi’s architectural language is distinct from McKim, Mead and White’s Italianate Main Building (fig. 3.5). Simple, rough concrete walls enclose upper level studios, each accessed by a private spiral staircase from small ground-floor courtyards. Many features show the pervasive influence of Le Corbusier, from the Ozenfant House-like elevation of individual upper-level studios, each accessed by a spiral staircase from a small ground-floor courtyard, to the use of piloti-like piers and béton brut noted by Stierli. The attempt to wed private enclosures with exterior communal spaces shows he was thinking in both monastic and Mediterranean terms. Venturi makes one literal gesture meant to identify the building as “Roman” by showing embedded casts of ancient reliefs along the façade, a detail that would literally tie the new structure to its physical, historical and cultural context. These efforts to mediate history and modernity recall contemporary works by BBPR and other Italian architects, and attest to Rogers’ direct influence on Venturi’s thinking despite his later assertions to the contrary.

68 The trip to Egypt and Greece included Giza, Aswan, Luxor, Karnak, Athens, Suirion, Olympia, Delphi, Eleusis, Corinth, and other sites. For a listing of all Venturi’s travel destinations and analysis of his design project, see Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden.”
69 See Stierli’s discussion of this project in relation to BBPR’s Torre Velasca and Gardella’s Casa alla Zattere; “In the Academy’s Garden,” p. 52.
Another gap between Venturi’s later recollections and the record of his Academy letters regards the Italian architect Armando Brasini. In an essay describing Brasini’s influence on his work, Venturi writes:

My fascination with the church of Il Cuore Immacolato di Maria Santissima in the Parioli section of Rome by Armando Brasini began in the mid-fifties and I have continued to learn from this building as my sensibilities have evolved since then…that building haunted me as did other work of Brasini, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in 1956 in his studio and home in Rome….my favorite view of this church is from the front and from across the Piazza Euclide while sipping and espresso in a café under an arcade as gas pumps protrude in the immediate foreground as it holds its own behind intervening Roman traffic—as you learn from it and enjoy it. What you see is a harmonious and dissonant architectural symphony of complexly layered elements…[which] in the end compose in the Fascist era a glorious final gesture of what can be considered Baroque survival.70

Given this retrospective account of ardent admiration for Brasini’s work, it is curious that Venturi’s letters home make no mention of the architect himself, whom he visited at his studio and home in 1956, or the church of Il Cuore Immacolato which he found so mesmerizing.71 In general, Venturi recorded and discussed his encounters with established architects extensively in his letters home. The reputation of Brasini’s pre-war work may have played a role, since on the few occasions when Venturi mentions Fascist architecture in his letters his tone is unmistakably deprecating. When describing the Great Temple of Edfu in Egypt, he uses the adjective pejoratively: “One thing I learned from it is that Egyptian architecture is not the heavy, pompous, humorless & fascist kind that I had pictured. This temple has great power, subtlety & refinement.”72 When he went on “a little tour around Rome [with Rogers] investigating modern architecture. There is much of it, which is good, but it is mostly quite bad,” they included a stop at the “1942 Exposition Buildings, still

ridiculous and pompous, mostly.”  

That final “mostly” hints at an evolving appreciation of certain EUR structures, like Brasini’s EUR Forestry Building (fig. 4.9). This structure, plus two of Brasini’s other “neo-Baroque” buildings, had cemented themselves sufficiently into Venturi’s thinking to be among the illustrations for *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* a decade later.  

Either Venturi’s appreciation of the work of a Fascist-era architect whose postwar work continued in an heroically monumental mode, or his willingness to admit this publicly, took some time to develop.  

Venturi’s Pritzker acceptance address named Brasini among the enduring Roman influences on his work, citing the “discordant juxtapositions of the layered facades of arcades of Armando Brasini’s EUR Forestry Building (now demolished) which significantly revealed Mannerism to me.”  

He recalled that “It was in the last few weeks at the Academy that I realized Mannerism was what turned me on—and made Michelangelo relevant—relevant for an American architect of my time.”  

In this case, his later recollections are consistent with his correspondence, as the first and only reference to Mannerism in Venturi’s letters home is found in that describing his final trip:

I arrived back from Florence last night. My stay there was entirely satisfying. I revisited quietly & carefully some buildings of the Renaissance & Mannerist periods which meant very much to me—especially Michaelangelo’s Medici tombs & Laurentian Library—also some Pontormo & Parmigianino paintings.

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74 The three projects by Brasini (misspelled “Brazini”) he includes are the EUR Forestry Building (fig. 121), the church of Il Cuore Immacolata (figs. 172-73) and the Orphanage of Il Buon Pastore in Rome (fig. 219-220).


Venturi has described how this interest in Mannerism (which he mentioned once in his statement of purpose), evolved gradually out of his initial emphasis on the Baroque:

For me, I went [to Rome] looking for SPACE—among forms and in piazzas—but I fell in love with Borromini, became enamored of Michelangelo and discovered Mannerism and, later, symbolism.78

For a young American architect to be so interested in this style in the late 1950s was notably precocious. Mannerism was an artistic category of relatively recent vintage, developed by scholars of cinquecento Italian painting in the early twentieth century and only first applied to architecture in the 1930s and early 1940s.79 It would become a far more familiar, if contested, concept in the 1960s through influential studies like John Shearman’s Mannerism of 1967.80 However, this obscure, liminal style had been intertwined with modern architecture only a few years earlier, in a 1950 essay by Colin Rowe.81 “Mannerism and Modern Architecture” was Rowe’s second analytical elucidation of design parallels between Le Corbusier and sixteenth-century Italy.82 In it, he concludes that similar manifestations of “architectural derangement”—the enigmatic blank panel on the Villa Schwob’s façade, “both disturbance and delight,” and blank panels on two facades of the 1570s by Palladio and Zuccheri—reflect the fact that “the mental climate of the sixteenth century receives its

80 Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967. Another key work published during this decade include Walter Friedländer’s Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting (New York: Schocken Books, 1965) presented essays written in the 1920s. Craig Hugh Smyth’s Mannerism and Maniera (Locust Valley, NJ: J. J. Augustin, 1963) was published soon after his 1959-60 Academy residency in Art History. The earliest discussions of architectural mannerism were published in Britain by Rudolf Wittkower, Nikolaus Pevsner, and Anthony Blunt, while 1960s scholarship on Giulio Romano and Michelangelo tended to categorize their architecture as “Mannerist.”
82 The first was “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,” Architectural Review 101 (March 1947): 101-104; reprinted in Rowe, The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa. This line of thinking would become even more broadly influential after these essays were re-published in the mid-1970s.
clearest parallel at the present day,” employing the sort of psycho-cultural interpretations typically used to explain the style’s visual tensions and ambiguities.83

While never explicitly invoked by Venturi, nor in any of the Fellows’ statements of purpose, the work of Rowe and Rudolf Wittkower, Rowe’s thesis advisor at London’s Courtauld Institute from 1945-47, provided another influential rationale for considering modern architecture in light of Italian precedents in the mid-twentieth century.84 Their theoretical framework is distinct from that of Giedion: rather than abstracting Baroque three-dimensional spatiality for modern design priorities, Wittkower and Rowe emphasize the two-dimensional and intertextual play of façade proportions, elements and layers. Anthony Vidler has aptly described Rowe’s vision of Mannerist and modern works as homologous, with visual similarities explained as not directly imitative, but the result of parallel “paradigmatic formal procedures” used by architects in both periods.85

With Rowe as his ambassador to practicing architects, Wittkower’s Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism of 1949, a strictly art historical study of the Italian Renaissance, would exercise immediate influence on modern architecture in the 1950s.86 Although London was the epicenter of Wittkower and Rowe’s joint influence, Venturi would

83 "Mannerism and Modern Architecture,” Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, p. 42-43. Rowe also suggests in his concluding sentence that the synchronous scholarly “discovery” of mannerism in the early twentieth century, as Le Corbusier was designing his villas, further supports “a corresponding frame of reference.”
84 Wittkower was the Academy’s Resident in Art History in 1962, after his research had shifted to the Baroque era for his 1955 book on Bernini and the still influential Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750 of 1958. Colin Rowe was an Academy Resident in architecture in 1970.
85 Vidler, Histories of the Immediate Present, p. 62.
86 This was seen particularly in the renewed interest in modular systems and proportional aesthetics; see Henry Millon, “Rudolf Wittkower, ‘Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism’: Its Influence on the Development and Interpretation of Modern Architecture,” JSBAH 31, no. 2 (May 1972): 83-91. Millon notes that Wittkower’s influence was amplified by the concurrent publication of Le Corbusier’s Le Modulor in 1950, and that Le Corbusier claimed (against the evidence) that this work was completed in 1948, ostensibly to predate the publication of Architectural Principles. Denise Scott Brown explicitly credits Wittkower’s influence on the New Brutalist circle London, where she was a student at the Architectural Association, with inspiring her to travel in France and Italy in search of “Mannerist architecture as well as early Modern architecture” in 1956. See Stierli, “Interview with Venturi and Scott Brown.”
have almost certainly been familiar with him in the early 1950s. Rowe’s seminal essays of 1947 and 1950, and Venturi’s first article of 1953, were all published in the London-based *Architectural Review*, where Venturi also submitted his unpublished article from the Academy in 1955. This attachment to the British journal makes it highly likely that he knew Rowe’s writings well, helps explain his receptivity to Mannerism while in Italy.

In “Mannerism and Modern Architecture,” Rowe uncovers precisely the sort of formal complexities and contradictions that Venturi would extol in his first theoretical manifesto two decades later. Rowe’s interest in reading the intricacies of architectural surfaces may also have influenced Venturi: Vincent Scully’s introduction to the first edition of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* highlights Venturi’s embrace of the discreteness of the Italian façade over the formal integrity of the Greek temple celebrated by Le Corbusier. While Venturi’s interest in the façade and the ambiguously mannerist interplay of elements would echo Rowe’s interests, his approach to these ideas is far less weighty than Rowe’s dense analyses in the Germanic tradition of *Kunstgeschichte*. Venturi’s authorial approach would be more ironic in tone and closer to connoisseurship than scholarship, although Venturi and Rowe were each directly influenced by T. S. Eliot’s ideas on the reconciliation of modernity and history.

Both Venturi’s statement of purpose to the Academy and the preface to *Complexity and Contradiction* include the same citation from Eliot:

> Tradition involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to any one who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the...

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87 Rowe came to the U.S. in 1952 to study at Yale, where he interacted with Louis Kahn (who may have introduced Rowe ideas to Venturi). Rowe taught at the University of Texas and Cornell from 1956-58. See C. G. Shane’s obituary, “Colin Rowe, 1920-1999,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 53, no. 4 (May 2000): 191.
88 In his 1976 introduction to the reprinted version of “Mannerism and Modern Architecture,” Rowe tepidly admits that “the initiatives of Robert Venturi have, to some extent, illuminated the situation” but that while “he has extended the theater of architectural discourse, the theme modern architecture and Mannerism still awaits the extended and positive interpretation which it deserves;” *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*, p. 29.
89 On Eliot and Rowe (as well as Clement Greenberg), see Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present*, pp. 85 and 216, n. 54.
past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense ...is what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity. ...What is to be insisted upon is that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.  

Venturi’s treatise is often credited with inaugurating a return to historical consciousness in late twentieth-century architecture, redefining the architect’s role from the heroic artist of High Modernism, “accountable primarily to his artistic imagination,” to a humbler position as “an interpreter and form-giver of a pre-existent cultural situation,” accountable to an audience, a place, and a tradition. Eliot’s image of historical influence operating on the artist not as a sequentially ordered canon, but as a simultaneous whole, aptly summarizes the way Venturi presents architectural history in *Complexity and Contradiction*. This book, a coda to his fellowship and prelude to his mature career, is described by Stierli as “the intellectual digest of its author’s extensive travels across Europe in the late 1940s and his two-year tenure at the American Academy in Rome between 1954 and 1956,” through which he was “channeling the findings of the trip into a historically rich theory of architecture relevant to contemporary practice.”

Venturi’s manifesto is a protest against “the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture,” which his first sentence assaults with the “gentle” weapon of his own subjectivity: “I like complexity and contradiction in architecture.” He presents these qualities as a middle ground between sterile, diagrammatic Miesian purity and its equally objectionable opposite, “the precious intricacies of picturesque or expressionism.” The book sets out a set of formal principles that he believes permit complexity and contradiction

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91 Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden,” p. 54.
92 Stierli, “In the Academy’s Garden,” p. 43.
93 Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 22.
to emerge: ambiguity, double-functioning elements, duality ("both-and"), accommodation, distinctions of interior and exterior, and "the obligation towards the difficult whole." Both Venturi’s list of formal qualities and his presentation of them as a middle ground between two architectural extremes echo developing definitions of Mannerism and its traditional position between the “sterile” Renaissance and more “expressionist” Baroque.

Venturi’s book is a slim, heavily illustrated volume, featuring 253 figures in its first 103 pages. The book’s text consists largely of brief observations of the works illustrated, which function as individually demonstrative instances rather than authoritative exemplars of the various qualities. Overall, *Complexity and Contradiction* reads as though the conceptual framework could stand just as solidly with a completely different supporting cast of examples. Unlike Rowe’s notoriously “close readings,” Venturi’s analysis skims lightly, generally expending a sentence or two to discuss one insightfully identified feature of each work, but seldom discussing any image more than once. His eclectic figure groupings initially appear to be casual, even randomly chosen instantiations of various principles. However, his juxtapositions of very different sorts of subjects produce creative cross-readings—high style and vernacular, modern and historic, palaces and chair legs—which were certainly very carefully and deliberately constructed (fig. 4.10).

While Venturi’s heterodox illustrations do not demonstrate a clear order, they do send a number of tacit, even subconscious messages to the reader. One concerns the place of history in the architect’s consciousness. The fact that, in his presentation of principles meant to enrich current architecture, the vast majority of illustrative examples—roughly 200 out of 253 figures—predate the twentieth century declares that these ideas are more easily

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94 In the analysis that follows, I consider only the first portion of the book that explicates general principles, not the thirty-page presentation of Venturi’s own design work that follows in the first edition.
95 A few, notably Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, are illustrated and discussed multiple times, although each illustration supports one observation: a plan shows its imperfect grid, a photo the ramp’s violating diagonal, etc.
gleaned from works of past centuries than recent decades. Also, much like Giedion’s “pre-history” chapter in *Space, Time and Architecture*, Venturi gives pride of place to Italian architecture and art, which provides eighty-eight of his 253 illustrations, far more than any other country (of these, roughly half are from Rome, half from elsewhere in Italy). Furthermore, most of these “casually” selected examples are drawn from his personal travels and favorite books. Venturi’s principles did not precede his architectural experiences; his subjective aesthetic doctrine arose after contemplating a specific set of works and ideas over many years.

Venturi admits unapologetically that his choice of illustrations reflects his personal preference for Mannerist, Baroque and Rococo architecture (roughly eighty belong to these periods). However, despite a highly informed historic awareness, he never provides dates for any architecture except his own (the second edition of 1977, which added image captions, provides dates for paintings only). Thus, while arguing *for* history, *Complexity and Contradiction* is not *a* history in the scholarly, diachronic sense. Richardson, Cortona, Le Corbusier, Piranesi, Hawksmoor and Aalto are not grouped together on the same page to provoke Wölfflinian stylistic comparisons, or because their works emerged from similar cultural conditions of patronage or ideology, but as contemporaneous objects for a gaze undergoing initiation into new ways of seeing (4.11). Venturi’s use of the term “Mannerism” is also historically unorthodox: he uses it both traditionally, to designate a specific category of sixteenth-century Italian art, and to describe a set of formal principles he identifies in...

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96 By comparison, thirty-nine are from the U.S., thirty are British, and twenty-one French. Importantly, all but two are from Europe or the U.S.

97 By way of comparison, Le Corbusier provides some dates in *Vers une Architecture* (for Doric temples, automobiles, and his own work). That Venturi does provide dates for paintings (he includes works by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, and Morris Louis) appears intended to underscore the artistic modernity of his argument.
varying places and times. In *Complexity and Contradiction*, almost every architect whose work he includes in the book is grouped under this label:

The desire for a complex architecture…is an attitude common in the Mannerist periods: the sixteenth century in Italy or the Hellenistic period in Classical art, and it is also a continuous strain seen in such diverse architects as Michelangelo, Palladio, Borromini, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, Soane, Ledoux, Butterfield, some architects of the Shingle Style, Furness, Sullivan, Lutyens, and recently, Le Corbusier, Aalto, Kahn and others.

Thus, when Venturi calls Piero della Francesca’s early quattrocento *Flagellation of Christ* an “enigmatic Mannerist composition,” he is presumably referring to the unresolved bifurcation of its composition rather than its art historical proximity to a Pontormo.

Far more than Venturi’s idiosyncratic presentation of historic monuments in *Complexity and Contradiction*, it was his attitude towards history’s relation to contemporary architecture that exposed and massaged a set of disciplinary anxieties which had been festering for several years by 1966. In 1961, Nikolaus Pevsner identified what he considered “an alarming recent phenomenon” altering the relationship between form, historical investigation and architectural practice. This trend, known variously as the New Formalism or the New Historicism, was discussed by several critics in the 1960s. Jürgen Joedicke defined formalism in orthodox late modernist terms as the derivation of a building’s appearance from anything outside a building’s “objective” conditions as a tectonic and functional object, thereby resulting in “architectural disharmony.” In describing a subset

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98 In Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s 2004 book *Architecture as Signs and Systems*, pp. 73-101 and 212-217, they distinguish these “explicit” (historical) and “implicit” (formal) mannerisms more precisely.


100 *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 90. These names account for most of the book’s illustrated architects.

101 For a powerful and challenging recent account of the ways in which mid-century architectural historians constructed arguments for the discipline’s aesthetic autonomy, see Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present*.

of this larger phenomenon, the adoption of historical forms and motifs such as the many variations on the temple or palazzo form that proliferated in the 1950s and early 1960s, Joedicke attempts to remain dispassionate, but his distaste is palpable. 103

William Jordy’s more sympathetic attitude towards historically allusive buildings anticipates Venturi’s argument in important respects. In a 1960 essay on “the new classicizing trend in US architecture,” Jordy observes the enduring appeal of a design language that supplies “ready-made guarantees of architectural dignity” and a contemporary purpose for its use: “the aura of humanism clinging to classicistic forms automatically dilutes the sense of impersonality” of modernist blocks—i.e., “less is a bore,” in Venturi’s later, memorable words. 104 This essay’s numerous comparisons between neo-Historicism and Italian Mannerism foreshadow Venturi’s interests, but they do not present Mannerism as a positive aesthetic model. Jordy saw the modernist neoclassicism of Philip Johnson, Paul Rudolph, Edward Stone, and Minoru Yamasaki as imbued with “Mannerist ambiguity,” and his own attitude towards this association reads as equally ambivalent. 105 On one hand, Jordy did not find their attempts to marry the temple and the glass box, balance creativity and correctness, and layer stereometric and curtain walls to be intrinsically problematic. 106 On the other, he worried that the pursuit of “mannerist” reconciliations of history and modernity


105 Jordy invokes the label repeatedly as he observes “mannerist hesitancy,” “mannerist formalism,” “mannerist instability,” and the “deliberate use of mannerist elements for positive aesthetic effects and even proto-baroque indications of an eventual reconciliation of mannerist tensions.” He also invokes the equally problematic “academic formalism.” Joedicke too would warn that formalism might bring about a new, objectionable form of mannerism that consists of “the manipulation of recognized motifs in deliberate opposition to their original contexts;” Architecture Since 1945, p. 139.

106 Jordy finds Johnson’s Temple Kneses Tifereth Israel in Porthchester, NY (1954-56) a particularly successful solution, with its simplified axial schemes and classical proportions resulting in a building that “is far more transcendent than the lugubrious expressionism of the average modern synagogue;” p. 163.
would ultimately result in an architecture that “may quite literally cease to be modern in the sense that its imagery grows from the urgency of modern life,” and that “the modern movement will academically pursue the cult of beautiful building” to the point where “making modern architecture beautiful will predominate over making beautiful modern architecture.” Mannerism, for Jordy, represents a perilous threshold opening onto the path to an objectionably historicist, “academic” formalism.

Published soon after these serious meditations on the potentially dire consequences of historicism or a “new mannerism” in architecture, one of the most revolutionary aspects of *Complexity and Contradiction* is its tone. Whereas other critics were deeply concerned with the dire consequences of seduction by history, of losing a tenuous hold on modernism and falling back into the Beaux-Arts trap of imitative and meaningless eclecticism, Venturi embraces history as a friend, the gateway to an enriched and renewed modernity. This attitude was surely affected by the time he spent in proximity to the centuries-old buildings that illustrate his ideas. Venturi’s early travels and especially his Academy residency not only made history a phenomenally direct reality rather than an abstract danger, but allowed him to steep in it to the point where it no longer appeared threatening, but familiar.

If Rowe’s studies brought Mannerism into the Modern Movement’s genealogy, much as Giedion had with the Baroque, Venturi used Mannerist principles to resolve the problem of history in practice. The offhand style of Venturi’s writing paralleled his famously ironic use of historic citations in architecture. If Lincoln Center’s pseudo-classical veneer appears pretentious and flimsy, and Louis Kahn’s magnificent arches are burdened by the weight of their own ponderous poetry, the arch Venturi places above his mother’s front door is a drawn-on eyebrow, raised in amusement or curiosity. This lighthearted use of a shamelessly

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traditional form as superficial appliqué was both as modern as Pop Art and intellectually legitimate, grounded in the reading of Mannerist aesthetics as courtly and mischievous rather than tortured and angst-ridden. Irony would also defuse the ideological and symbolic bomb of modernist classicism’s association with Fascist monumentality: blatantly skin-deep and deliberately playful, it does not bow to history, but winks at it.

Venturi’s distinctive blend of taking serious subjects lightly and vice-versa would continue into his analyses of the American vernacular with Denise Scott Brown, shaping a career that would take them both, in his words, “from Rome to Las Vegas to Tokyo—but eternally back to Rome.” While Venturi was the first architecture Fellow from the postwar years to attain such an influential role, he was hardly the only one to achieve fame through a body of historically inflected work. Today Michael Graves, a Fellow from 1960-62, enjoys a global reputation from a successful international practice, a long academic career at Princeton, and high-style product design, particularly for Target stores. One of the large confraternity of postwar GSD graduates to win the Rome Prize, his application statement of 1960 had emphasized the need to experience architectural monuments phenomenally through travel, and also expressed a Giedion-esque interest in how “space conception” is altered by its physical context. Graves thus had a more abstract, less directly historical set of formal interests than Venturi, one more securely embedded in the visual and cultural framework of late modernism rather than a search for correctives.

109 Graves began teaching at Princeton immediately upon his return from Rome in 1962, and would become an even more formative force in its architecture program as Labatut before him. His populist designs for household products for Target stores brought him the broadest visibility.
110 Giedion was on the Harvard faculty while Graves was a student. He took Giedion’s course on urbanism, but found him to be a “dreadful teacher”; e-mail correspondence with author, 27 February 2008.
Graves’ earliest works from the decade after his return from Rome, such as the Hanselmann House in Fort Wayne, Indiana of 1967, were neo-purist deconstructions of the white box that were critically classified with contemporary designs by Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier (fig. 4.12). Their abstract work as the New York-based “Whites” was often contrasted with the more overtly historical style of Philadelphia-based “Grays,” who included Kahn, Venturi and Charles W. Moore. Neil Levine has argued that these groups reflect the “two very distinct and divergent” theoretical approaches to reconciling modern architecture and history in the late 1950s and early 1960s developed by Colin Rowe and Vincent Scully. Rowe emphasized modern architecture’s Renaissance legacy in abstract terms, through methodology and composition, whereas Scully observed formal continuity of the classical tradition within the modern movement. While Italian influences on the latter group would be more visually overt, both threads of influence placed Italy at a significant originating position for contemporary architectural production. When Graves says in 1995 “I believe you can’t think about Le Corbusier with any cogency without knowing Palladio,” this illustrates the enduring impact of Rowe’s thinking and writing.

Graves’ drawings and photography from his Academy stay are early demonstrations of this practice of viewing Italy in abstract terms (fig. 4.13). His drawings in particular present iconic historic buildings and locations in visual styles clearly informed by the art of the late 1950s: boldly gestural ink washes of Baroque churches recalling Abstract Expressionists like Willem de Kooning or Franz Kline; expressive Twombly-esque scribbles.

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113 Rowe, who taught Eisenman at Cornell and Cambridge, explicitly encouraged him to study Terragni; Shane, “Colin Rowe, 1920-1999,” p. 192.
which resolve into the nervous surface of the Superga in Turin, or a minimalist, kinetic view of the identifiable domes, lanterns, and acroteria of Rome’s roofscape; and a ballpoint sketch of the Tempietto that uses a ghostly, x-ray-like image to demonstrate the geometric unity of its interior and exterior forms (figs. 4.14–17). While Graves’ drawings echo somewhat Kahn’s vivid pastels of pyramids and temples, they more closely recall the analytic abstraction of Le Corbusier’s cahiers from his voyage à l’Orient (fig. 4.18). They also constitute one of the most extensive visual records of any architect’s fellowship, and from a documentary perspective provide a graphic pendant to Venturi’s letters.

Graves would increasingly position Italy in the foreground of discussions about his work during the 1970s, although in changing stylistic terms. Between his participation in two Italian exhibitions—the 1972 Milan Triennale’s presentation of the New York Five, and the 1978 “Roma Interrotta” celebration of the 1748 Giambattista Nolli Map in Rome—Graves’ architecture underwent a major shift. His compositions have consistently been generated from elemental building blocks, initially the utter abstraction of points, lines, and planes. Gradually these gave way to the platonic volumes celebrated by Le Corbusier, and soon his understanding of archetypal forms became a vocabulary of elements imbued with memory: “column, colonnade, tower, aedicule, or keystone.”

By the late 1970s, both his drawings and his architecture would take on strongly classical qualities, deploying these forms in works of monumental symmetry and compositional stability (fig. 4.18-4.19).

Graves’s mature, signature style indisputably helped “re-Italianize” late twentieth-century architecture and, like Venturi, he has long credited his experiences at the Academy

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117 Two pivotal projects illustrating this shift are his unbuilt design for the Fargo-Moorhead Cultural Center Bridge of 1977, and the Plocek House in Warren, New Jersey completed that same year. See Wheeler et al., Michael Graves, pp. 111-127.
and in Italy as an enduring source of creative inspiration.\textsuperscript{118} A recent volume presenting drawings and photography that he produced during his fellowship discusses their artistic modernity while explicitly framing his experience within the long tradition of the Grand Tour.\textsuperscript{119} A similar creative shift from a conventionally 1960s modern design language to overtly historical citations in the 1970s can be observed in other architecture Fellows, such as Robert Mittelstadt, who left the Academy early in 1965 when he won a major, career-launching competition in Northern California. Mittelstadt’s design for the Fremont city hall, just one part of his design for an entire community center complex, was a typically Brutalist concrete megastructure completed in 1969.\textsuperscript{120} By 1979, he was using the underside of a suspended Tuscan peristyle to light a townhouse living room in San Francisco (fig. 4.20).\textsuperscript{121}

But the postwar Academy’s legacy in architectural practice was more complex than merely helping inspire—or justify participation in—the postmodern revival of classical elements so prevalent in the 1970s and ‘80s. Fellows have claimed varying forms of influence from Rome; Duane Thorbeck, for example, credits his travels in Italy’s agricultural landscapes and hill towns with inspiring a continuing interest in integrative design for rural communities in his native American midwest.\textsuperscript{122} Warren Platner’s critically recognized practice encompassed furniture and product design as well as architecture (like Graves would), yet his aesthetic never deviated from an elegantly minimal 1960s modernism.\textsuperscript{123}

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\textsuperscript{118} Abrams, “Graves’s Travels,” pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{122} Thorbeck manages a Minneapolis-based practice and teaches architecture at the University of Minnesota, where he founded the Center for Rural Design. E-mail to author, 9 July 2007, and letter, Duane (Dewey) Thorbeck to author, 1 August 2007.
\textsuperscript{123} See Ten by Warren Platner (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975). A significant measure of Platner’s modernist credentials is the continuing commercial availability of his furniture from the 1960s and 1970s through the company Design Within Reach, which markets them as modernist classics.
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Although his work did not cite Italy formally, Platner wrote to Laurance Roberts in 1983 that:

Everything I do is colored by my experiences as a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome. That had a profound effect on my perceptions, on my thinking and on my ambitions. You and the Rome Prize showed me how to look, how to see and how to appreciate and distinguish. I have gone on doing that and I still do. I learned it from you.\textsuperscript{124}

The eclectic work of Ron Dirsmith, elected to the National Academy of Design in 1999, would invoke Rome while capturing other, more flamboyant sides of 1960s culture, most memorably in his work for Hugh Hefner and Playboy, Inc.\textsuperscript{125} Evoking the total-design philosophy of the Baroque Gesamtkunstwerk in a free-form way, his design partnership, the Dirsmith Group, credits inspiration for its integrated design philosophy to the sites Dirsmith and his wife (and professional partner) visited together during the Rome Prize fellowship.\textsuperscript{126} Both Dirsmiths describe their time at the Academy as “unequivocally the richest time of our existence [that] literally and figuratively changed our lives forever,” and maintain a second studio in Rome.\textsuperscript{127} Other architecture alumni would also conduct professional careers there, notably Spero Daltas, who maintained a large office in Rome from the 1950s through the early 1990s that administered numerous international projects in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{128} Astra Zarina, who joined the architecture faculty at the University of Washington in 1968, founded its Rome Center in 1970, only the fourth such U.S. architectural study abroad program in the city at that time. She would become a major presence among that city’s


\textsuperscript{125} Dirsmith remodeled Playboy’s Chicago headquarters, the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles, and designed the interior of Hefner’s private jet, among other projects. He discusses his work for Hefner in the forthcoming Beneath the Pleasuredome: Designing the Playboy Mystique (Minneapolis: Sterling & Ross Publishers).

\textsuperscript{126} See the firm’s website: http://www.dirsmithgroup.com/FGW/Inspiration.htm.

\textsuperscript{127} Letter, Suzanne Roe and Ron Dirsmith to Adele Chatfield-Taylor, 30 April 2002, Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.

\textsuperscript{128} At its largest, Spero Daltas & Associates had 250 employees in its Rome office. Interview with author, 24 April, 1 May and 14 May 2007. Daltas also served as an Academy Trustee from 1968-1992.
growing number of such programs through the 1990s, while carrying out a Rome-based professional practice as well.129

Not all postwar architecture Fellows have shaped their careers around Italy so directly, but most do credit their time in Rome with profoundly shaping their lives and work. Henry Jova called Rome his “watershed,” and Arizona-based James Gresham, who says his fellowship travels cemented his “personal infatuation with all things Mediterranean,” recalls finding himself:

completely unprepared for [the Academy’s] heady intellectual atmosphere that was filled with other talents and skills. To daily meet and talk with classicists, writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, as well as architects, was a rich and rewarding experience, indeed…you never knew who you may be seated next [to] at lunch or dinner. These are among my most treasured experiences from the Academy.130

Despite many such testimonials, in the late 1960s, before more than a handful of postwar Fellows had enough time to make their mark professionally, the institution’s faith in its own direction remained in considerable doubt. The final chapter of Alan and Lucia Valentine’s authorized, laudatory account of the American Academy’s first seventy-five years (an anniversary that fell in 1969) was optimistically entitled “The Future,” but conveys little confidence in its artistic mission. The authors cite a recent article in Harper’s Magazine on the Academy by art historian and cultural critic Russell Lynes, which apparently confirmed some ongoing concerns within its administration.

Lynes’ 1969 essay cut straight to the heart of the Academy’s most persistent, unresolved postwar problem: “In an age when ‘academic’ means stultified, square, yesterday, and Establishment, who wants to go all the way to Rome to further his career? Or, as some

think, tarnish it?" He notes that, while artists in search of “a free ride to Europe” will always abound, attracting those who will ultimately “ornament the Academy” through their later success is another matter. An unidentified architecture Fellow confided to Lynes, “I go sightseeing over weekends, but there’s nothing new in architecture here…. Rome is beautiful, but I don’t learn anything from it that’s going to teach me how to house people in the ghettos back in the States.” Twenty-two years after Charles Wiley went to Rome in hope of hot water, even a Rome Prize winner might remain unconvinced that architects should be in Rome.

The Valentines disclosed some of the Academy’s continuing internal turmoil over its artistic role. Its offerings to arts fellows—still essentially the Roberts formula of time and economic support for their work, freedom to pursue their own projects, plus the stimulation to be found in Rome and within an interdisciplinary community—had not, in the view of some, produced sufficiently satisfactory results, and proposals for another overhaul were in abundance. These included awarding even fewer fellowships than its finances permit, limiting the Rome Prizes in the arts to “those candidates who are not only of high quality but have a real desire to study in Rome.” Others considered changing the Academy’s essential structure by eliminating post-graduate fellowships for emerging scholars and artists (the core of the Founders’ structure) in favor of extended residencies for established figures, or giving up its institutional independence in favor of affiliation with one or more U.S. universities. Perhaps the most radical idea was to abandon the Academy’s most basic article of faith by

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133 They also note the problems inherent in attracting top applicants and the limitations of jurors’ biases. The fact that Robert Venturi was turned down twice before being awarded his fellowship shows how unskilled its juries could be at identifying those “high quality” candidates.

None of the most extreme suggestions gained much traction: Rome Prize Fellows in the arts, to this day, are typically (though not exclusively) at early stages in their careers, pursue independent projects, and reside on the Janiculum as part of an academically unaffiliated organization. Even the tradition of self-doubt would continue, with another internal survey of its purpose, goals and methods carried out in 1982.\footnote{See “The American Academy in Rome in the 1980s,” Memorandum, John W. Hyland, Jr. to Board of Trustees, 18 February 1982, “AAR Correspondence 1982,” Roberts Papers, Berenson Library.} By then, in the architectural world at least, Rome and the Academy were very much in vogue. Although by century’s end the disciplinary pendulum would again swing away from the Italcentric historicism of the 1980s, the city remains cemented as a critical point of reference in the American architect’s consciousness. It is no coincidence that when Charlie Rose asked Frank Gehry in 2005 where he went for creative inspiration, Gehry responded that he goes to Rome and looks at buildings by Borromini.\footnote{“Charlie Rose with Frank Gehry, Renzo Piano and Ada Louise Huxtable,” \textit{The Charlie Rose Show}, August 5, 2005.} The practice of finding, of \textit{making}, that city—its monuments, its piazzas, its legacy—relevant to contemporary architecture continues apace.

This ongoing reality is what makes the American Academy’s architectural survival most significant. In a world where global practice is far more centered on Beijing, New Delhi, and Dubai, Rome’s position is arguably even more marginal now than it was during the 1950s. What practical reasons are there for an architect to accept the Rome Prize today? Considered most cynically, the fellowship might remain valuable simply for its exclusivity, as a marker of distinction, another line on the resumé, an \textit{entrée} into a pedigreed fraternity.
whose membership includes usefully influential people. But another fellowship of similar vintage and function—the Paris Prize, originally awarded by the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects, which underwent several permutations after World War II to become the New York Prize awarded by the Van Alen Institute—offers similarly valuable support for an architect’s postgraduate development in an even more professionally vibrant city. Yet somehow it does not confer the same cachet.

What accounts for at least some of this difference is that, against all reason, the myth of Rome and the memory of the Academy have managed to retain prestigious, nostalgic, and desirable associations for American architects into the twenty-first century. These powerful associations, which operate in the mysterious realm of a discipline’s collective unconscious, could easily have faded into oblivion during the postwar decades. Conceivably, in 1947 the Academy could have renewed its commitment to a strict interpretation of McKim’s vision and offered young architects two years in Rome producing Beaux-Arts ink-wash envois of classical sites. Had it done so, the Rome Prize in architecture would have shriveled into a mere relic, completely detached from the artistic and cultural ethos of its moment. This in turn would have severed a major, longstanding tie between the American discipline and the city. It was both the Academy’s dusty but not entirely forgotten allure and the Rome Prize’s newly-minted associations with modernism that spurred dozens of young architects to sift through design journals, lecture notes, their one or two history books, and their imaginations to discover or fabricate convincing-sounding reasons to study there for their fellowship applications.

In deciding to relinquish much of its original, outdated cultural mission, the postwar Academy thus helped maintain a connection that would affect American architecture before, during, and after postmodernism. It also belatedly fulfilled not only Henri Marceau’s 1935
suggestions, but the competing vision of one of its original founders, architect William Ware, who had never fully supported McKim’s rigid adherence to the disciplinary strictures of Beaux-Arts education, but did share his faith in Rome as a teacher, albeit one whose lessons might change over time.\textsuperscript{137} This less doctrinaire approach allowed young architects to absorb the ancient capital not as the embodiment of a rigid cultural orthodoxy, but as part of an institution that conjoined it with support for American artists, intellectual liberalism, interdisciplinarity, and internationalism, one which welcomed open inquiry and genuine uncertainty about its meaning and relevance.

While one could argue, alongside Giovannini, that the postwar Academy merely wrapped a dangerous dose of Occidentalism in a palatable veneer, I have shown that it was not the disconnected, irrelevant site of exile chosen only by the most utterly anachronistic of architects that he implies. Not all of Academy’s architectural Fellows were necessarily “the best and brightest” of their generation, although several undoubtedly were. Yet overall, they were a very well-pedigreed and well-connected set of emerging professionals, hardly the dregs of second-tier backwater programs. The varying uses they made of their newly free-form Rome Prizes ranged from little more than casual, leisurely tourism to profound, deliberate, even epoch-changing architectural absorption in one of the world’s most culturally overburdened physical environments. Regardless of how exactly they spent their time at the Academy, the mere fact that so many modern architects made a series of individual decisions to add an extended stay in Rome part of their professional development, over time became a collective act that helped keep the city relevant to the discipline. For

better or worse, the renewal of the Rome Prize for architects after World War II maintained and rebuilt the frayed links between the city and all it represents with modern architecture and the American discipline that embraced it, at a time when these connections could have easily disintegrated altogether.

Postwar architectural tourism to Italy certainly existed outside of and independently of the Academy. Had it vanished altogether, many young architects would have still found their way to Rome with Giedion and Le Corbusier as modern guides. But how many young graduates of American design schools would have found the means or the motivation to live fully immersed in the city for a full year or two, especially as the domestic job market exploded during the building boom of the 1950s? Even Russell Lynes, skeptical as he was about the Academy’s relevance to modern artists in 1969, believed that “it must be a very thick skin through which Rome does not penetrate and become permanently lodged in that length of time.”

As the case of Venturi helps illustrate, an important experiential distinction exists between sight-seeing and residency. The latter often confers a sense of ownership and identification with a place which can endure for decades. This sense of identification is seen in the fact that most postwar architecture Fellows associated themselves with the Academy and Rome throughout their professional lives by prominently proclaiming their Rome Prizes and through continued institutional support and participation.

In contrast, with the notable exception of Louis Kahn, most of the senior architects who were involved with the Academy as Residents did not associate themselves with it publicly to any similar extent. Overall, their stays appear to have had little direct professional resonance beyond providing a brief respite in their lives and work, seeming

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139 This is not to say that they were completely uninvolved after their residencies (Howe and Barnes became Trustees, and many would serve on the Rome Prize juries), but that Rome and the Academy are essentially absent from public discussions of their work or career.
more like a footnote to careers established on other terms rather than a stepping stone to success. To go to Rome for several weeks under the Academy’s aegis must have carried more prestige than a mere vacation, even during its nadir in the mid-1950s, but very few Residents bothered to retain traces of their stays or mention the Academy, their travels, or much at all on the subject of Rome or Italy in subsequent writings. Even so, these residencies were collectively important. Each time another nationally-known figure lent his name and time to the Academy, this furthered its survival as an architectural—rather than strictly humanistic—institution. As the absence of nationally recognizable names from the list of Residents in painting and sculpture from 1947-1966 demonstrates, Rome’s relevance to established artists at mid-century was neither automatic nor universal, but painfully reconstructed year after year.

The Academy clearly benefited from the mature architects who spent a few weeks leading field trips with young Fellows, enjoying drinks in the courtyard with classicists and composers, and visiting or re-visiting monuments new or old. But did these stays in any way affect the creative decisions they would make as architects upon return? Beyond the notable but singular case of Howe’s work on the U.S. Consulate in Naples, little direct evidence in the form of drawings, photographs, letters or other documents suggests that Academy residencies had much direct effect on mid-century architectural works. But it cannot be a

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140 For instance, the papers of Pietro Belluschi, Edward Larabee Barnes and Edward Durell Stone hold no correspondence relating to their residencies. Kahn and Venturi, by contrast, appear to have kept nearly all associated documentation of their Academy contacts and visits among their professional papers.

141 From 1966-1994, more prominent architects’ names were added to Academy’s Centennial Directory: Philip Johnson, Henry Cobb, Romaldo Giurgola, Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, Kevin Roche, and David Childs.

142 The history of the Academy’s relationship with postwar painting and sculpture remains to be written. In the case of sculpture, the persistent presence of conservative Trustee Paul Manship on juries until his death in 1966 was a major factor. The most prominent of postwar Fellows in painting would be Philip Guston (FAAR 1948-49). While a few came as visitors, only in the 1980s-90s several nationally-known painters would come as Residents, such as Philip Pearlstein (RAAR 1982), Frank Stella (RAAR 1983) Roy Lichtenstein (RAAR 1989), and Elizabeth Murray (RAAR 1991). Other major artists would serve as Trustees during these years: Chuck Close, Jasper Johns, Lichtenstein, Mary Miss, Claes Oldenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, and Stella.
merek coincidence that the authors of so many modern, white, stone-covered American
temples in New York City, Washington, D.C., Fort Worth, and New Delhi spent these same
years strolling on the Campidoglio, through the Forum Romanum, and across the Piazza San
Pietro. Regardless of whether their neoclassical proclivities made them more inclined to
accept an invitation to Rome, or their Academy experiences in any way influenced their
design thinking, the connection is too pervasive to be dismissed outright.

The consonance between these architects’ hybrid designs for modern, classically
disposed pavilions for highly symbolic American cultural institutions, their contemporary
presence in the city that had set the standard for formal architectural grandeur for centuries,
and their affiliation with an institution committed to furthering Rome’s cultural influence in
the U.S. and vice-versa, should be conjoined and further explored in critical assessments of
mid-century neo-historicism as an undeniably rhetorical design language. This might suggest
that the Academy’s role was fundamentally conservative, supporting a new professional
establishment whose expressions of American power drew upon design traditions associated
with varying forms of global imperialism. However, it is equally true that these architects
were seeing Rome from within an institution whose newly liberal spirit provided an
important counterpoint to the nation’s official presence abroad during the Cold War.143

Regardless of whether being in Rome directly altered such buildings’ architectural designs,

143 In a report written in 1957 in support of Roberts’ administration of the Academy, Trustee Henry Francis
Taylor described a paradox among his colleagues in Italian museums, government, the Vatican, and Rome’s
other national academies: “whereas during the past five years American prestige at the cultural level has been
rapidly declining—especially in regard to the barrage of propaganda to which the Italians have been subjected
by official agencies of the U.S. Government—the American Academy has risen steadily in their estimation. The
reason for this they quite candidly admit is that due to the discretion, tact, and often calculated diffidence of the
Director, the Academy has been content to take its legitimate place in a rather circumscribed and highly critical
intellectual society, which has changed very little since the seventeenth century, and is not constantly trying to
sell them a bill of goods. Not only do they find this refreshing politically, but they are aware that there still
exists in the United States a hard core of people who value art and learning for their own sakes and who have
no ulterior motive in their exploitation.” Letter, Henry Francis Taylor to the Trustees of the American
Academy in Rome, n.d. (copy sent to Isabel Roberts, 18 May 1957), AAR Correspondence 1956-1964, Roberts
Papers, Berenson Library.
their architects’ associations with the Academy could certainly inflect how they as professionals and these designs in particular might appear to an international audience.

More far-reaching than its possible connections to classicizing strains of mid-century modernism, or its more famous role as the womb of architectural postmodernism, is the fact that the Academy functioned as a loom, a stable framework that allowed dozens of individuals to gradually weave a freshly defined and understood vision of Rome’s importance. Its persistent presence helped maintain and renew the much older, dilapidated edifice of belief which holds that any truly creative architect will be drawn to Rome, will appreciate it, will be enriched by it. After World War II, the Academy’s original, normative faith assimilated modernism’s dominant tropes of individual vision and revolutionary discovery by asserting that the Eternal City can still be engaged in original terms, that architects can still have an authentic, if not entirely unmediated, reaction to its streets, buildings, paintings, and culture, and thus, like Le Corbusier, learn new lessons from its ancient stones and reframe tradition in avant-garde terms.

Whether or not this faith rests on a solid foundation, or has itself become an empty, conventional, “academic” practice is another question entirely. But one important question, upon which I will at least offer an opinion, is whether the survival of faith in Rome has been a healthy thing for American architects. Is it helpful for U.S. architects to view their work and their environment through the lens of Rome, a city so geographically and culturally distant, so closely associated with a set of architectural values long-since overthrown? I believe that it is—or, more conditionally, that it can be. If Rome is approached not as the *sine qua non* of a glorified Western tradition, but as an illustrative counterpoint to and enduring influence upon the reality that American architects hope to shape, its continuing prominence is justifiable. In a country where most history is measured in either decades or geological
epochs, architects do benefit from experiencing a place where no physical intervention can avoid considering millennia of history. In a culture that values novelty and expansion, it is educational for creators of new environments to experience the physical results of centuries of preservation and adaptation. On a continent where decentralization and the voracious consumption of land and resources have been the norm, discovering the pleasures of density and proximity provides an alternative frame of reference that can, and has, helped architects modify the status quo created by politicians and developers. More than any ability to impress clients with a cultured persona, historically fluent design citations, or learned, incisive analyses of venerated façades, it is the expanded view that can be acquired from Rome which provides the greatest measure of the city’s worthiness as an ongoing disciplinary referent for architects. Ultimately, the final measure of whether returning to Rome helps or hurts American architecture must be determined by its effects on American architects, seen in the professionals they become and the work that they do.

Rome is hardly the only city from which American architects can and should learn valuable lessons. It is also a city with a specific set of dangers, the very perils identified by Giovannini in his well-posed warning about the nefarious effects of the Academy on modern architects, especially the risk that it naturalizes a potentially exaggerated, exclusive and elitist vision of Rome’s importance to impressionable young designers. These dangers might best be averted through a deliberate emphasis on the city’s current status as not *the* caput mundi, but one of many global centers whose lessons are at least as relevant. Today it is just as valid, and perhaps even more educational, to frame Rome through the lens of Las Vegas, Tokyo, or New Delhi as the reverse. Giovannini’s essay contributes an important reminder of the power of institutions, and the places and traditions they honor, to construct ideology. It also demonstrates how strongly he too believes in the city’s own power, a power
that operates both rationally and emotionally, to shape the architect’s imagination. In this, Giovannini differs from the American Academy’s most ardent supporters only in the belief that these effects circumscribe and delimit, rather than enrich, creative thinking. It is up to Rome’s architectural adherents to demonstrate the contrary.

This critique of Rome’s role revives and reframes the recurrent dialectic between the value of academic over more liberal forms of design education. It also raises a further question: is an Academy that simply sponsors free and independent inquiry in a fixed, traditional location still an “academy” in any meaningful sense? Perhaps when the American Academy shifted from its original promotion of Rome as the prime model of a valorized cultural legacy to a more amorphous faith in Rome’s more flexible, even licentious tradition of creative inspirational value for artists and architects, it should have relinquished its title as well. By 1947, it was certainly no longer an “academy” in the Colbertian tradition established in seventeenth-century France, an engine using fixed methods to identify, codify, preserve and diffuse cultural eminence and certainty. However, in light of to the term’s original, Platonic significance—the name of the Athenian grove where young seekers gained deeper understanding through conversation, inquiry, and debate with more experienced thinkers—1947 might also be considered the year when the American Academy in Rome finally earned its own name.
Illustrations: Conclusions

Fig. 4.1: Robert Venturi, Guild House, Philadelphia, PA, 1961-66 [Complexity and Contradiction]

Fig. 4.2: Robert Venturi, Vanna Venturi House, Chestnut Hill, PA, 1959-64 [Complexity and Contradiction]
Fig. 4.3: Robert Venturi in Piazza Navona, Rome, ca. 1955 [VSBA, AAUP]

Fig. 4.4: Photo, Academy Fellows on Pantheon Dome, 11 June 1955 (VSBA, AAUP)
Fig. 4.5: Photo, Academy Fellows on Pantheon Dome, 11 June 1955 [VSBA, AAUP]

Fig. 4.6: Robert Venturi, sketch of Pantheon oculus, Rome, letter to R. and V. Venturi, 12 June 1955 [VSBA, AAUP]

Another interesting thing I did the Sunday afternoon before I left for Sicily was attend a St. Peter's beatification ceremony of a Frenchman in the 12th C. whose name I have forgot. The basilica was crowded with people & the ceremony involved in a great way. The art display -
Fig. 4.7: Robert Venturi, Design for studios in American Academy garden, 1955 [VSBA, AAUP]

Fig. 4.8: Robert Venturi, Design for studios in American Academy garden, 1955 [VSBA, AAUP]
Juxtaposed directions create rhythmic complexities and contradictions. Figure (105) illustrates a chair at Caserta that contains violently contrasting curvilinear and rectangular rhythms. At another scale, the interior of Adler and Sullivan’s Auditorium (104) has juxtapositions of sweeping curves and diverse repetitions. In some anonymous Italian architecture (105) adjacent contrasting arcades contain contemporaneous rhythms.

Superadjacency is inclusive rather than exclusive. It can relate contrasting and otherwise irreconcilable elements; it can contain opposites within a whole; it can accommodate the valid non sequitur; and it can allow a multiplicity of levels of meaning, since it involves changing contexts—seeing familiar things in an unfamiliar way and from unexpected points of view. Superadjacency can be considered a variation of the idea of simultaneity expressed in Cubism and in certain orthodox Modern architecture, which employed transparency. But it is in contrast to the perpendicular interpenetration of space and form characteristic of the work of Wright. Superadjacency can result in a real richness as opposed to the surface richness of the screen which is typical of “serene” architecture. Its manifestations, as we shall see, are as diverse as Ruskin’s layered walls in the Belvedere Courtyard in the Vatican Palace (106) and Kahn’s “mints . . . wrapped around buildings” in his Salt Institute for Biological Studies (107).

Superadjacency can exist between distant elements, such as the papyriion before a Greek temple, which frames the composition and ties the foreground to the background. Such superimpositions change as one moves in space. Superadjacency can also occur where the superimposed elements actually touch instead of being related only visually. This is the method in Gothic and Renaissance architecture. The nave walls of Gothic cathedrals contain arcades of varying orders and scales. The shafts and ribs, blind arcades, and arches which make up these arcades penetrate and are superimposed upon each other. At Gloucester Cathedral (108) the superadjacency is contradictory in scale and direction: the enormous diagonal buttresses cross the plane of the delicate order of arcades in the transept’s wall. All Mannerist and Baroque façades involve superadjacencies and interpenetrations on the same plane. Giant orders in relation to minor orders express contradictions in scale in the same building, and the series of superimposed pilasters in Baroque architecture imply spatial depth in a flat wall.
Fig. 4.11 Robert Venturi, page with illustrations [Complexity and Contradiction]

Fig. 4.12: Michael Graves, Hanselmann House, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1967.

Fig. 4.13 Michael Graves drawing in the streets of Rome, 1961 [Ambroziak, Images of a Grand Tour]
Fig. 4.14: Michael Graves, “SS. Nome di Maria, Rome, 1961” [Ambroziak, Images of a Grand Tour]

Fig. 4.15: Michael Graves, “Superga, Turin, 1961” [Ambroziak, Images of a Grand Tour]
Fig. 4.16: Michael Graves, “Rome from Jane’s Apartment,” 25 July 1961 [Ambroziak, *Images of a Grand Tour*]

Fig. 4.17: Michael Graves, Sketch of Tempietto, Rome, May 18, 1961 [Ambroziak, *Images of a Grand Tour*]

Fig. 4.18: Le Corbusier (C.-E. Jeanneret), sketch of the Baths of Caracalla, Rome, 1911 [Cahiers]
Fig. 4.19: Michael Graves, “Archaic Landscape,” 1993 [Ambroziak, Images of a Grand Tour]

Fig. 4.20: Michael Graves, Denver Public Library, 1990-96 [Michael Graves: Selected and Current Works]
Fig. 4.21: Robert Mittelstadt, Mittelstadt Duplex, San Francisco, 1979
Appendix: Architects at the Academy, 1947-1966

Architects in Residence, 1947-69
‘47-49: George Howe
‘50-51: Louis I. Kahn
‘51-52: Frederick J. Woodbridge
‘52-53: Jean Labatut
‘53-54: Pietro Belluschi
‘54-55: Ernesto Rogers
‘55-57: N/A
‘57-58: Francis F. A. Comstock
‘58-59: Nathaniel Owings (Fall)
        Jean Labatut (Spring)
‘59-60: Edward Durrell Stone,
        Francis F. A. Comstock
‘60-61: Max Abramovitz (Spring)
‘61-62: Roy Larson
‘62-63: James M. Hunter
‘63-64: Edward Larabee Barnes (Fall)
        Jacob Bakema (Spring)
‘64-65: Jean Labatut
‘65-66: Aldo van Eyck
‘66-67: Robert Venturi (Fall)
‘67-68: Edward Larabee Barnes
‘68-69: Jean Labatut

Modernist architectural historians in residence or as “notable visitors”:
Sigfried Giedion (RAAR 1966)
William Jordy
Vincent Scully
Lewis Mumford

Modern Architects on Board of Trustees, ’47-66:
George Howe (‘50-55)
Wallace K. Harrison (‘59-64)
Nathaniel Owings (‘61-72)
Edward Larabee Barnes (‘63-78)

“Notable Visitors,” ca. ’47-66:
Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Paul Rudolph
Eero Saarinen
Serge Chermayeff
Robert Moses

Rome Prize Fellows in Architecture, 1947-1966*

Walker O. Cain (‘47-48): Princeton, 1940
Charles D. Wiley (‘47-48): GSD 1941
James R. Lamantia (‘48-49): Tulane 1943, GSD 1947
Dale C. Byrd (‘49-51): U. Oklahoma 1944; GSD 1945
Spero P. Daltas (‘49-52) U. Minnesota 1943; MIT 1948
Henri V. Jova (‘49-51): Cornell 1949
David Leavitt (‘50-51): U. Nebraska 1940; Princeton 1942
Joseph Amisano (‘51-52): Pratt 1940
Thomas L. Dawson, Jr. (‘51-52): Yale 1949
Tallie B. Maule (‘51-52): Princeton 1948
Richard E. Barringer, (‘52-53): GSD 1951
Stanley Pansky ('52-53): GSD 1950
John H. MacFayden ('53-54): Princeton 1949
Robert L. Myers ('53-54) Cornell, 1950; GSD 1951
Warren A. Peterson ('53-55) Yale 1953
James Gresham ('54-56) U. Oklahoma 1953
Robert Venturi ('54-56) Princeton 1950
Warren Platner ('55-56) Cornell 1941
Charles G. Brickbauer ('55-57) Yale 1954
Dan R. Stewart ('55-'57) U. Cincinnati 1952; MIT, 1955
David J. Jacob ('56-'58) Syracuse 1951; Cranbrook 1952
James R. Jarrett ('57-59) Yale 1955
Ronald L. Dirsmith ('58-60) U. Illinois 1956
John Jay Stonehill ('59-60) Yale 1959
Theodore J. Musho ('59-61) U. Cincinnati 1958; MIT 1959
Michael Graves ('60-62) U. Cincinnati 1958; GSD 1959
Royston T. Daley ('60-62) GSD 1956
Bernard N. Steinberg ('61-63) Cornell 1955; U. California Berkeley 1956
Charles T. Stifter ('61-63) IIT 1959; MIT 1960
Thomas N. Larson ('62-64) U. Minnesota 1958; GSD 1962
Duane E. Thorbeck ('62-64) U. Minnesota 1960; Yale, 1961
Milo Thompson ('63-65) U. Minnesota 1962; GSD 1963
Robert J. Mittelstadt ('64-66) U. Minnesota 1958; Yale 1964
Theodore Liebman ('64-66) Pratt, 1962; GSD 1963
Charles O. Perry ('64-66) Yale 1958

*The school and year provided following each architect’s fellowship years indicate completion years for degrees in architecture, not all earned degrees.
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Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Louis I. Kahn Collection
Venturi Scott Brown and Associates Collection
George Patton Collection
Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Department of Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.
Max Abramovitz Papers
Walker O. Cain Papers
George Howe Papers
Wallace K. Harrison Papers
Berenson Library Archives, Villa I Tatti
Laurence and Isabel Roberts Papers
Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
Jean Labatut Papers
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Yale University Library, Department of Manuscripts and Archives
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Secondary Literature


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