

CARLO SCARPA
THE COMPLETE BUILDINGS



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INTRODUCTION

Emiliano Bugatti

Carlo Scarpa (1906–1978), one of the most important Italian architects of the twentieth century, worked mainly in Venice and the surrounding Veneto region. He was deeply connected to the local culture in terms of art, architecture and technique. He collaborated with public institutions on permanent and temporary exhibitions and with private clients on houses and tombs. The goal of this publication is to respond to the need to evaluate Scarpa's work within the history of architecture.

Cemal Emden is an architectural photographer who began the photographic mission that led to this book in 2018. To photograph all of Scarpa's works is a demanding and ambitious project. Access to the buildings was one of the most complex aspects, and the organisation of shooting was long and difficult. Many of Scarpa's works do not manifest themselves as icons in public space, exhibiting the strength of mass or structure that we might associate with other modernist practitioners; rather, his buildings often insinuate themselves between existing structures. These are works that give character to and sit in dialogue with places. They also frequently feature a highly detailed design, as if they were art objects rather than architecture. Crucially, these objects are expertly arranged so as never to be isolated; they are always part of a broader framework made up of connections, references, evocations and symbols. In this project, Emden moved within this complexity, entering Scarpa's spaces to explore, discover and ultimately reveal them to the observer.

The book opens with a comprehensive essay by Jale N. Erzen highlighting the complexity of Scarpa, his work, his context and his various influences. The essay rightly reveals connections with the world of figurative art. In doing so, it offers a narrative that goes beyond architectural production to place the architect in a broader sense as a great artist of the twentieth century. Erzen's essay is followed by Emden's photographs, organised chronologically from Scarpa's earliest projects of the 1930s to his final ones in the 1970s. Every project included here has been carefully chosen in accordance with previous publications on Scarpa's output and with the essential support of Luigi Guzzardi, architect, scholar and devoted admirer of Scarpa. Since Scarpa had graduated from the Venice Academy of Fine Arts with a diploma allowing him to teach architectural drawing, but without a professional architecture qualification, he faced opposition from the Chamber of Architects, which refused to recognise him. As a result, Scarpa was not the official architect for some of his projects, and several others were completed by associates. Moreover, after 1978, when Scarpa died, his ongoing projects were finished by collaborators.

Following the photographs are interviews with the owners of two important artisan workshops still active in Venice. This was a wonderful opportunity to include the voices of those who directly witnessed and were involved in Scarpa's working practices, a point of view little explored in monographs. They reveal the materiality of architecture, not only through its material fabric and intricate details but also by shedding light on the process of proceeding slowly through dialogue between the architect and the craftsman.

This project has been guided by the beauty of and love for Scarpa's works. Certainly, these concepts escape the quantification and limits with which we attempt to rationalise everything around us. Beauty cannot be contained within a theory; it is like love: a disruptive, irrational and at times violent force. Scarpa's works have changed Emden's photography: the complexity of his architecture required new tools and techniques, and this inevitably altered Emden's artistic point of view. His versatile approach to multiperspective photography is a fitting vehicle through which to showcase the sophistication of Scarpa's architecture.

OPPOSITE. Steps in the entrance hall of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia during a day of 'high water' in Venice.



CARLO SCARPA'S WORLD: BEAUTY AND MEANING

Jale N. Erzen

In the almost half a century since Carlo Scarpa's death in 1978, the world of architecture has changed drastically. The 1970s and 1980s were shaken by postmodernist parodies and high-tech style as well as vehement discourse and debate; steel and glass towers began to compete with one another in cities all over the world; and today the skies are filled with the strange architectural gymnastics resulting from the structural evolution of the past decades. Amid all this, Scarpa's relatively small-scale and comparatively quiet works seem to be assured of their longevity, even if, in the haste of the past half-century, quite a few have undergone alterations. Interest in Scarpa is growing; those who visit his works are today awed by the architect's profound attention to detail. There is clearly a growing need for sensitivity, care and beautiful form. One of Scarpa's favourite poets, Paul Valéry, claimed in his dialogue *Eupalinos; or, The Architect* (1923) that 'certain [buildings] are mute; others speak and others, finally – and they are the most rare – sing'.¹ Although for Scarpa architecture was poetry, we can be sure he was aware that his works also had a musical quality.

My first encounter with Scarpa's work dates back more than fifty years, when the architect was still living and creating. Experiencing the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona, restored by Scarpa between 1959 and 1974, left an unforgettable impression that sparked my interest in architecture. In those days, and even in the first decade of the twenty-first century, public interest in Scarpa was scant. The bookshop at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice, on which Scarpa worked from 1961 to 1963, carried only one book on him, and my friends and I were the only people visiting. On my visit at the time of writing, however, there were more than fifteen books available, and still others had already sold out. There were many visitors, as there were too at the Brion Tomb (1969–78), some 60 kilometres away near Treviso. This renewed interest in Scarpa's work is both astonishing and, at a time when cultural production all over the world can frequently seem to be declining in quality and creativity, perhaps indicative of a growing need for the kind of finesse and sensitivity that Scarpa represents. The spaces he created are other worlds; worlds that do not belong to our hurried, insatiable and often crude existence. In them live a poetic awareness, gentility and care.

There are as many works that Scarpa abandoned, to be finished by others, as there are those that he completed, and among the latter some have been extensively altered; likewise, a few of the posthumously finished works were executed according to the exigencies of the time. We have not included in this book some of the houses on which Scarpa worked because the parts that belonged to him are difficult to separate from the new additions, especially when photographed. The book *Carlo Scarpa: Architecture and Design* (2006), edited by Guido Beltramini and Italo Zannier,² has a chapter rich with such fragments by Scarpa, but only those that may be seen as complete have been included here.

This book has been in the making for more than five years, an endeavour that began with the photographic work of Cemal Emden and my modest textual interpretations. In the process, I met many great minds, both in writing and in person. I owe a great deal to the Venetian architect Luigi Guzzardi, with whom every meeting was an intense lesson on Scarpa. Emiliano Bugatti added to my enthusiasm with his excitement and questioning approach. I cannot thank the architect Davide Arra enough for generously accompanying me to Possagno and to the Brion Tomb. His love and enthusiasm for the work was contagious. Of course, it is not possible to adequately thank Cemal, who not only created the foundations of this book with his photographs but enriched it with his superb sense of organisation and his deep insight into architecture.

OPPOSITE. Entrance through the so-called propylaeum of the Brion Tomb in San Vito d'Altivole, Treviso.



Background and Beginnings

The Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa was in many ways an artist unlike any other. His design and architecture work developed in contrast to the atmosphere of a growing and increasingly purist modernism. The architectural scene in Italy witnessed a period of great uncertainty in the postwar period as cities like Rome and Milan saw historic urban memory erased by colossal modern structures. As architects searched for solutions in utopian debates, Scarpa, who was educated in the arts and in design, stood clear of this fervid discourse and experimentation. According to the Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, 'the highest level of formal coherence was found in the works of those who, seeking refuge from the surrounding commotion, isolated themselves ... Historiographical treatment must be suspended in the case of such golden, isolated individuals, and give way to "classical" monographs.'³ Following Tafuri, we must look at the work of Scarpa as standing clear of any epoch and as belonging instead to all time.

Scarpa began his career in the late 1920s with interior design projects, such as the interiors of the Caffè Lavena in the Piazza San Marco, the Venini glass workshop in Murano and the renovation of the Villa Angelo Velo in Fontaniva, Padua. By the early 1930s he was artistic director at Venini, designing windows and glass works, and in 1935 he embarked on the remodelling of the Great Hall at Venice's Ca' Foscari University, a project that he would return to twenty years later. The knowledge of craft techniques that he developed during his education, such as the creation of different kinds of joint, as well as his experience acquired through glassmaking, gave him insights into the specific qualities of materials, a sensitivity that later became his signature in the intimate details of his architectural designs. His openness to craft, ornament, technique and the boundless possibilities of materials and bricolage distinguishes Scarpa as an artist and designer and is perhaps above all what characterises his modest genius. It was access to the immense possibilities that lie in craft and in the employment of varied materials that opened up for Scarpa the potential of form. Tafuri called him a 'wise artisan' for the design and formal intelligence of his craftsmanship.⁴ Scarpa's drawings, rich with minute details and layers of interpretation, attest to this inventiveness.

As Tafuri explains, after 1945, in the aftermath of the Second World War, architecture became an ideology, an instrument of power through which to assert change and to invent solutions to the impasse of modern life. The new architectural avant-garde, which Tafuri describes as a phase of reconstruction, citing such architects as Franco Albini, Bruno Zevi, Ludovico Quaroni, Mario Ridolfi and others, functioned as a deconstruction of fixed history.⁵ Between the end of the war and the early 1960s, Scarpa designed several villas, a theatre, works for the Venice Biennale and an apartment building, all seemingly formulated in a secretive language of symbols and interrelated forms, and in a rich array of materials, that could charm and mystify the observer. The exhibition installations that also occupied him throughout these years brought out his extreme sensitivity to artistic content, preparing him for later museum projects. Italy, in trying to revive its artistic heritage, was at the same time drawn to restorations of historical buildings and museum upgrading. Scarpa's contemporary Albini, who worked mostly around Genoa, was also known for working with museums, and Tafuri contrasts him with Scarpa: 'Compared with the quiet murmur of Albini's apodictic signs, Carlo Scarpa's museum projects appear too expressive ... On the one hand, then, there was Albini's "let it be" attitude; on the other, there was Scarpa's magisterial narration.'⁶ Designing exhibitions for Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Antonello da Messina and the drawings of architect Frank Lloyd Wright revealed Scarpa's deep knowledge of the arts and proved him to be as versatile in many facets as the Renaissance masters.

Early commissions such as the Olivetti Showroom (1957–58) and the addition to the Canova Plaster Cast Gallery in Possagno (1955–57) gave Scarpa confidence and a new insight into museum and gallery design. In both projects, Scarpa's understanding of light and the qualities of corporeally experienced space, as well as the interaction between the exhibited works and their environment, makes itself apparent, and this would be the particular language Scarpa would carry into all his subsequent projects, including the Castelvecchio Museum renovation and the Brion Tomb. For Tafuri, Scarpa's complex approach to design, both humorous and at the same time grave and solemnly symbolic, is best exemplified by the Brion Tomb, begun in 1969 and continuing through Scarpa's last years, and the Villa Ottolenghi (1974–78, Bardolino), finished after his death. Although Tafuri emphasises the symbolic qualities of the architect's work, Scarpa's collaborator Sergio Los claims that his works should also be

read as elaborate expressions of form: 'In poetic language form is so important that it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish it from the content to which it refers. Seen thus, Scarpa's compositions seem to have no content other than their form.'⁷

For Scarpa, the minutest aspect of any artwork could contain an infinite world of meanings and forms, and this was reflected in his approach to creating. His works welcomed endless articulations, open, like poems, to multiple interpretations and surprises. According to Los, Scarpa's working method involved constant elaboration and then simplification.⁸ The drawings that he left of works both executed and aborted bear witness to his immersion in an untiring search for alternatives, for new means of expression. Throughout his life, he stood alone and engaged in continuously perfecting his architectural language, which ultimately became a unique testament to the expression of art's spiritual power through history, as Hegel had claimed.⁹

Scarpa's Venetian Heritage

I am fond of water, perhaps because I am a Venetian.¹⁰

To gain true insights into the life and world of Carlo Scarpa, one need only watch the footage of the lecture he gave at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna on 18 October 1976 – two years before his death – and observe his almost awkward cheerfulness, how happy he was when talking about architecture.¹¹ As Scarpa comes to the end of his talk, entitled 'Can Architecture Be Poetry?', he is almost dancing. Scarpa was certainly an architectural poet, turning materials and textures into lyricism and rhyme. His work was influenced by Secession architects such as Otto Wagner and the turn-of-the-century spirit brought to the field by the Viennese school, and, of course, by Frank Lloyd Wright. However, when he finally saw Wright's works in person, Scarpa realised how different his own design approach had been. As Los also claims, 'Wright's work had interested Scarpa for years and he had tried to imagine them from publications, but when at the end of the sixties he was able to see it at first hand he was disappointed by the absence of structural details which, he thought, distinguished the new architecture.'¹² Yet the background to Scarpa's creativity as well as his personality, his joyfulness in the immediacy of invention, has to be sought in Venice and the other cities of the Veneto region where he grew up and worked.

The historian Fernand Braudel has drawn upon Le Corbusier's description of Venice as incorporating 'All kinds of techniques, all kinds of materials', so that the city 'teaches us a masterful lesson in harmony'.¹³ This poetic description might equally be applied to the multifaceted personality of Scarpa himself. The creation of such a harmony, the way different materials and colours are united, was one of Scarpa's great skills as an artist. We can see this in the second phase of work at Ca' Foscari, in his remodelling of the Great Hall (now Aula Mario Baratto) in 1955–56, where each piece of wood is different in colour, length and the way it is joined. Taken as a whole, the design is an orchestral composition. The figurative in Scarpa's work has the mnemonic background of the Venetian experience: of constantly moving waters, infinite reflections, lights and colours. The harmony of which Le Corbusier writes is an inherent attribute of Venice, seen not only in the way it connects styles, expressions and epochs but in the way each moment that is lived in every corner of the many islands of the lagoon is a richly varied symphony of different hues and atmospheres.

Scarpa characterised himself as 'a man of Byzantium, who came to Venice by way of Greece', a person who looked both inwards and ahead.¹⁴ Venice was a milieu with an important craft tradition, and its many forms of artisanship interested and involved Scarpa. As an artist-craftsman he worked in many techniques, integrating diverse materials such as wood, metal, stone, glass and mosaic, frequently at the same time. The design courses that he received during his art education combined with his Venetian background to create a keen relationship between eye, hand and thought that gave him the ability to combine artistry, craft, construction, calculation and formal excellence. The influences of Venice on Scarpa's art are manifold. One may become aware, for instance, of the relationship between Venice's Byzantine and Baroque sensibility and Scarpa's art by observing the intricate ornaments and luxurious atmospheres, along with the colours and constantly changing light, of the Piazza San Marco. Nevertheless, having distilled these at once joyous and nostalgic moods, Scarpa was a modern Venetian who acted as a bridge between the splendours of the past and the modernism of his time. One need only walk the arcades of the Piazza San Marco with its boutiques, or visit the glittering

Caffè Florian, founded in 1720 and where Scarpa often spent his leisure time, to see how modern he was by contrast. Yet, as his Olivetti Showroom makes evident – itself positioned under the arcades of the piazza – Scarpa also interpreted the finesse and shine of Byzantium in his modern works: glazed brass, crystal glass, laced metal or wooden screens, mouldings and more.

As Tafuri points out, 'There is a risk of abstraction in speaking of Scarpa's relationship with Venice.' But 'his design by "figures," his suspension of "icons of the possible" in dissociated spaces, his use of masking facades, his work on materials and colors all compelling lingering attention, a devoted absorption in the absence of any final syntheses – are strongly reminiscent of Venice as seen through Middle European eyes.'¹⁵ Scarpa, achieving a perfection equal to the finery of historic Venice, strikes a nostalgic tone in reclaiming a past that may no longer be understood. Like the contrasting forms of the late Baroque or the complexity of a Borromini design, Scarpa's work is design taken to its limit, to the exhaustion of all possibilities.

What is Architecture?

As men of our time we have redeemed many things, both morally and socially.
But as architects we have not yet redeemed the form of humble, everyday things.¹⁶

The great diversity of Scarpa's creative output, ranging from glass, cutlery and picture frames to exhibition design, restoration, original buildings and landscapes, is unusual in the history of architecture. As such, it opens up questions of what architecture is, and who is an architect. Thus it becomes necessary to turn to certain theories and concepts of architecture in order correctly to situate Scarpa within the history of his profession.

As the philosopher Hubert Damisch wrote, the genesis of architecture may be traced to the biblical narrative of Noah's Ark.¹⁷ It symbolises the edifice that protected good people and creatures from the flood, establishing the notion that architecture represents shelter and protection. This idea seems pertinent to those works of Scarpa's that are situated in a city where flooding is common; in the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, for instance, he took the radical decision to invite the waters in: 'Instead of denying entry to it [the water] Scarpa allowed it to flow off more freely, and, by raising the floors in the rooms at risk, guaranteed their continual use. By choosing appropriate materials he reduced water problems to a minimum.'¹⁸ The architect Mario Gemin, responsible for the maintenance of the restoration of the Fondazione, said in a conversation in 2022 that without Scarpa's intervention the floodwaters of November 2019 would have been disastrous for the building.¹⁹ One of Scarpa's last designs, the base of the Monument to the Partisan Woman (1968), a bronze sculpture by Augusto Murer set on irregularly placed stone blocks in the lagoon, may also be interpreted as a symbolic reference to the biblical flood and the protection of the innocents, since the entire sculpture often disappears beneath the rising waters.

The architectural concept of construction is an integral one for Scarpa, whose designs were only fully conceived during the process of their construction and were often not executed according to predetermined plans or calculations. The building up of their form through a gradual assembling of elements evokes the concept of montage, where the whole is composed through the joining of individual parts. Thus, in Scarpa's work, 'construction' signifies the process of building piece by piece over time. For many critics, his drawings attest to the fact that for him, execution and building were the primary principles upon which his design progressed. As the architect George Ranalli notes, Scarpa's method, which consisted in repeatedly layering a drawing so that it acquired depth and intensity, is immediately evocative of the act of construction.²⁰

Architecture as body is also an important concept through which to understand Scarpa's architecture. The symbolism of the body was used in many architectural treatises of the Renaissance, notably in churches, which were conceived in cruciform plans, evoking the body of Christ on the cross; with Scarpa, it again came to play a decisive role in relation to architecture: 'the human body, never reduced to a passive measuring system or – worse still – to a "caryatid" of the decorative (symbolic) order, worked as a repository of habits and register of sensations.'²¹ Furthermore, the building itself may be conceived as a body, having both an inside and an outside. A representative example in Scarpa's oeuvre is the Villa Veritti (1955–61) as well as the earlier Veritti Tomb in Udine (1952). In both structures, the interior is turned in on itself, introverted, while the exterior is extroverted and looks towards the outside.

In the Veritti house, elements such as the door, the windows and the protruding architectural features are outward-looking. This is also true of the Veritti Tomb, despite its huge circular opening: from the outside, the linear texture of the stone planes helps to keep one's gaze on the exterior wall, and even the circular form of the entrance serves as a symbol of the exterior, keeping the gaze fixed. Once inside, however, one seems to be closed in. One should not understand this to mean that Scarpa's interiors are sealed off and lightless, though. Scarpa often used exterior light as a sculpting and colouring element; light is treated as an ever-changing and conditioning feature that gives the expression of life both to space and to whatever objects it contains.

Architecture has always required an understanding of nature, and Scarpa's works embrace an acute sensitivity to natural materials, seen even in an awareness of the qualities of individual pieces of stone or wood. All his works are adapted to their geography and topology, yet the architect never considered a work finished simply because it had fulfilled its functional requirements and was at home in its environment. It is as though, upon the completion of a work, Scarpa nevertheless always turned back and added a last touch, something extra, even extravagant, like a beauty mark that gives character to a face. For him, no design was ever at an end; a further detail was always called for, such as the drawings and writings he executed on the windows of the Ca' Foscari hall overlooking the Grand Canal.

The Architect-Poet

I have tried to do poetic architecture, but a certain kind of architecture which would emanate a certain sense of poetry for reasons of a formal nature, that is the form expressed could become poetry ... Can architecture be poetry? ... Of course architecture is poetry. Frank Lloyd Wright said so in a lecture he gave in London. So the answer is: yes, sometimes architecture is poetry, not always poetry. Society doesn't always ask for poetry. Poetry isn't something for every day. You mustn't think: I'll produce poetic architecture. You can't say: I'll turn out poetic architecture. Poetry is born of the thing in itself, if the person engaged in it has it in him, this nature.²²

If one views the world with love and passion, does things with excitement and joy, then this is poetry made not of words but expressed or created in other ways. Scarpa, according to the accounts of his family and friends, was filled with an uncontainable joy when he strolled around the Piazza San Marco, or when he talked about architecture in interviews or lectures. This poetic sensibility was not something casual or easy; he arrived at it through serious thought, hard work and scrutiny, as his drawings, all of which are poetic expressions as well as records, reveal. Scarpa not only created poetry with his architecture or his glass works, which radiate with life and feeling, but he read a great deal of poetry and collected poetry books. When he died, his library contained 241 such books, mostly of French writers including Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud,²³ as well as many medieval Italian poets, like Dante and Guido Cavalcanti.

The base of the Monument to the Partisan Woman, with its pillars set at irregular heights in the Venetian Lagoon, gathering algae, is a poem written in stone and concrete. That is, Scarpa's base, combined with its placement within the rising and falling waters and the reclining statue that lies upon it, becomes a poetic articulation on the subject of pain and cannot be analysed in any calculable fashion. Not that Scarpa never used calculations; in fact, he conceived his own units of measurement, his own proportional system, which he used to create rhythmic divisions and repetitions. As he explained in a lecture:

I used some tricks. I needed a certain kind of light and I worked out everything on a grid of 5,5 centimeters ... In this way you can divide up the parts and you'll never have 150 but 154. Many architects use regulatory plans of the golden section. Mine is a very simple grid which allows for movement – the centimeter is arid, while in my way you obtain a relationship.²⁴

This measuring system and the insistent way in which he broke with symmetry and regular order, the way he staggered relationships so that axes break away from their established course, makes Scarpa an anti-Vitruvian, even un-Palladian architect. He insisted that to understand his works one had to remember that he had 'an immense

desire to belong inside tradition, but without having capitals and columns, because you just can't do them anymore. Not even a god could design an Attic base nowadays. That's the only decent one ... all the rest are junk, even Palladio's in this respect, are just tripe.²⁵

For Scarpa, designing was like writing poetry: he had to be sure of every detail of every element used, as one chooses words for a poem. His designs therefore always took a long time to finish. It is obvious from his drawings that he often changed his mind, conceived new ideas, added details; he could not be forced to work fast. Often, too, he worked on several projects at the same time. This was a way of distancing himself from a work in progress in order to be able to return to it with fresh eyes. The poetic inspiration shows where each element joins the next, as in a poem where each word draws one into a web of references and meanings that can be interpreted from many perspectives. As he installed artworks in a museum space, or even as he placed staircases, balustrades or other architectural features in a building, Scarpa made sure that the empty spaces in between acted as punctuation, giving cadence, breath and measure to the whole. This symbolism also is how Scarpa thought about architecture as poetry, not only because it is poetically aesthetic but because every element and joint can at the same time be metaphoric. Whether visiting Scarpa's buildings, looking at his drawings or tracing his biography, one meets a man who is both an artist – someone who lived with poetry and could at times get lost in his love of art and architecture – and someone who could be practical and humorous. Scarpa, who grew up in the old towns of the Veneto, spent his childhood playing among columns and arches, under Baroque walls and details, surrounded by Byzantine colours and the exuberant variety of the Venetian Gothic. His teaching also reflected his character and his architecture. As Franca Semi, his former student and collaborator, relates, Scarpa frequently used his extensive cultural and literary knowledge when giving his courses, talking often of Valéry, for instance, or of music.²⁶ Certainly one can conclude that Scarpa's architectural depth and finesse were the fruits of his rich cultural awareness.

Modernity and Tradition

Modern architecture cannot do without a knowledge of the architectural values that have always existed.²⁷

In exploring the complexity of Scarpa's architecture and design, one discovers connections with diverse interlocutors: great architects of the past such as Borromini, or poets and writers like Mallarmé and Proust. The diversity of precedents from which he distilled his personal choices had the effect of creating a modern language as well as constituting in Scarpa a bridge between the past and the present, without following any fashions.

In the way Scarpa created a whole from manifold relationships that are difficult to disentangle, we can see similarities with Borromini, for example the plan of his church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (1638–46) in Rome, in which diverse geometries can be discerned.²⁸ Likewise, in his detailed analyses and keen insight into the human psyche, we may find a relationship with the way Proust intensifies experience; Scarpa's architecture creates bodily, tactile and visual experiences that are bound together in an intricate and multivalent manner. And the highly symbolic use of language in Mallarmé, whose work Scarpa is known to have appreciated, finds its parallel in Scarpa's ingenious approach to building relationships between architectural elements.

Scarpa's creations thus relate both to the past and to the future, akin to a multispatial and multitemporal sphere tied to the life of materials as well as to the way the eyes and hands work together, a capacity that has evolved over the history of humankind. Yet one of the great achievements of his work is the way every historical reference ultimately belongs to or is brought into the present. One outstanding example of this is the patio inside the entrance to the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV), where, in a contemporary usage, he placed the building's original Istrian stone doorway horizontally on the ground to create a basin or pool.

As noted earlier, Scarpa's versatility found expression in a great many areas of creative production. For Scarpa, no detail was trivial and each was handled with the utmost care and invention; he was aware that architecture is experienced in the sensory details. Whether he was working on a grand scale, as in the Brion Tomb or the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa (1963–73), a relatively small space like the Olivetti Showroom, a glasswork or a landscape, he articulated every part so that it could be seen and appreciated for its individual qualities. In the Olivetti Showroom, only 21 metres long

and 5 metres wide (69 by 16 ft), different directionalities are created by the orientation of diverse objects – the curving form of the bronze sculpture, the concrete pond, the black marble water basin, the tesserae of the floor – creating singular atmospheres that add up to a complex articulation. We might view the work as a kind of paratactic montage that, taken together, results in formal unity and poetic expression. Likewise in Scarpa's houses, such as the exterior of the Villa Veritti, each individual element – an entrance, a staircase or a balcony – is treated so as to stand on its own, yet creating an orchestrated whole. As one moves from one element to the next, a kind of poetic narration is built up that works against fragmentation.

Both in creating his forms and in connecting his materials, Scarpa worked outside the present; indeed he belonged to all time. His skill was in choosing the position and articulation of an object so as to highlight both the historical reference and create an installation that is always also situated in the present. We might look here at the eternally striking placement of the equestrian statue of Cangrande della Scala at the Castelvecchio, jutting out into space at an angle and orienting the viewer. Scarpa's objects, as they stand in relation to the present and to their environment, act as mnemonic devices, each one opening up to an extended web of artistic and temporal references. Every detail is treated as a discrete work in itself, yet in turn it alludes to a further detail, which may yet be different in form and material – and so on, so that we read the relations in succession like musical notes to make up the character of the whole. As the eminent critic Kenneth Frampton noted, 'Throughout Scarpa's work, the joint is treated as a kind of tectonic condensation; as an intersection embodying the whole in the part, irrespective of whether the connection in question is an articulation or a bearing or even an altogether larger linking component such as a stair or a bridge.'²⁹ His works open up worlds that have to be travelled through from element to element, as in a painting or a poem, the totality and meaning of which can only be grasped by scrutinising each facet individually. The art historian Vincent Scully remarked of Scarpa's repeated references and unique intermingling of modernism and tradition: 'These relationships with the enduring old are especially moving because Scarpa so dearly loved the early, rather heroic phases of modern architecture.'³⁰

Scarpa's Genius Loci

To practise architecture also means to learn from and understand nature, and Scarpa's works evidence a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to natural materials and their qualities. To situate a work in its environment is also frequently a matter of how it relates to those natural materials that surround it, whether wood, stone or water. As alluded to earlier, Scarpa tended to use several materials together in a single work, relating their different textures and colours through the use of joints, for instance creating sculpted metal pieces to connect woods of varying types. This profusion of colours, textures and forms creates an integrated whole in which one is reminded both of the underlying natural qualities of the materials and of the craft of the artist. The entrance bridge to the Fondazione Querini Stampalia is one example, as is the Commemorative Stele for the second anniversary of the 1974 bombing in Brescia, a sculptural work of stone, wood and metal that astonishes in its simplicity and enigmatic symbolism. At the Monument to the Partisan Woman, Scarpa let the waters of the lagoon ebb and flow against the stones, creating textures and new colours with the algae that they gather over time. In this work, Scarpa resisted all visible and rigid calculation, allowing each piece of marble to reveal its own character and form while relating to the other materials, whether solid or fluent, that surround them.

Over the course of his career, Scarpa undoubtedly developed his personal architectural and design vocabulary. However, even his last works, such as the Brion Tomb, possess clues that lead us back to his early works, so revealing the way in which certain principles of his vocabulary were there from the very beginning. Nevertheless, in their diversity and richness of detail, no two Scarpa works, no two architectural edifices, are alike. Just as the details and forms of each structure or interior vary in form, colour and character, so each work takes its formal principles from the way it relates to the place in which it is situated. One could mention here again the Aula Mario Baratto, which overlooks the Grand Canal and has been designed so as to keep one's gaze directed towards the waters via a maze of wooden constructions working as partitions. The Fondazione Querini Stampalia is another outstanding example of how a restoration can be designed to relate the building to its environment, beginning with the way one

enters it from a sculptural bridge over the canal and the way the stepped entrance indicates the rising of the waters of Venice, and seen also in the metal screen that reflects the movement of the waves and the lights of the canal.

The Villa Veritti is special in the way Scarpa has created a relationship to a site that had no typical character, being neither urban nor rural. He designed two interlocked semicircular forms within a long and narrow parcel of land, creating differing spaces around the house. As one moves around the villa one notices that each elevation relates in different ways to the environment. The architect Boris Podrecca, in his commentary on Scarpa's 'Viennese Point of View', claimed: 'this architecture is accomplished within a space very close to the soil, where its sturdy rooting in the reality of use reflects its link with its *topos*.'³¹

Light, Sacred and Profane

... all round in level lustre rose
A shine beyond those shining ones, which grew
As gathering light on the horizon grows³²

Like Le Corbusier with his characteristic ribbon windows, Scarpa created windows and openings that were unique to him and whose relationship to light constituted new ways of illuminating a space. A well-known example is the Canova plaster gallery, where he opened up the corners of the building to create dual-sided, vertical inverted windows that ensure that the sculptures are always illuminated as the position of the sun changes; at no time of day is one side of the sculptures left in the dark, as they receive light not only from the windows but reflected off the white walls. With such windows, the movement of the light from east to west and from higher to lower levels creates a continually changing light and makes it possible for the exhibited objects to be viewed in unique ways. Scarpa's openings to let in light are often not distributed according to a symmetrical arrangement across the flat surfaces of a structure; rather, he creates openings where light is needed. At times this may result in an asymmetrical arrangement of varying sizes, shapes and spacings, as can be seen on the long facade of the Banca Popolare di Verona (1973–78).

Scarpa's windows are also often layered, with a frame belonging to the wall and an additional inner cladding. In the Olivetti Showroom, the almond-shaped windows on the mezzanine have a latticed cover that softens the light and creates a movement of shadows. In the Castelvecchio, the Gothic windows are also double-framed, the inner windows having wood and glass and the original outer ones attached to the exterior wall. The round first-floor windows on the wall facing the street at the Banca Popolare di Verona are also double-layered. This gives an appearance of a thick wall, a protected surface. In this we can identify a similarity with Louis Kahn's work, especially the recessed windows of his Exeter Library (1972) in New Hampshire.

One of Scarpa's early works, the Venezuela Pavilion (1953–56) for the Venice Biennale, has a striking cubic form with vertical windows on its upper half that extend onto the roof. A search for exactitude in lighting and interior here leads to an exceptionally modern expression. As the art historian Carlo Bertelli, who knew Scarpa from his student days, wrote in his text 'Light and Design', 'Scarpa was fascinated by Leonardo and loved to attribute his own notions to him on occasion. But here is one of Leonardo's maxims that Scarpa would certainly have subscribed to: "A broad source of light, set high up and not too strong, is that which makes the details of bodies look most attractive."³³ Scarpa's constant involvement with light manifested in various ways as he transformed it into a multitude of effects. It may be used for its colour-giving properties; it may be softened as it filters through different materials, such as the warm, translucent marble of the cubic windows in the Brion chapel or the wooden grilles of the Olivetti shop; it might be reflected off water or walls or be made to enter space from various angles, as in the Canova Plaster Cast Gallery. Indeed, we might say that Scarpa designed with light, using it as an active architectural and atmospheric element.

Drawings, Joints, Ornaments

His early interest in art and passion for drawing furnished Scarpa with a deep understanding of the language of lines. The experience of drawing from the figure during his student years at Venice's Accademia di Belle Arti equipped him with a rich vocabulary of the line, his command of which can be seen both in his glass designs and in his architecture. His glass designs demonstrate an awareness of curves and concavities that can only be rooted in an engaged experience of looking at and drawing the human figure, while his drawings attest to his exactitude at the same time as they stand as works of art full of feeling. In fact, all Scarpa's design elements, whether geometric or symbolic in form, relate back to his humanism, grounded in classical art and architecture.

Scarpa's drawings, which are kept today in important museums and archives, were often used as direct instructions for the execution of his works.³⁴ They are traces of his thinking and design methods, as well as records of how his designs took form through constant reflection and revision. In the architectural works themselves, the detailed mouldings and dentils that frequently appear, almost like a private formal language, are akin to lines in a drawing and act to emphasise the lines and forms of other elements; the way he installed mosaics into his walls, floors and pavements also attests to this sensitivity with the line.

From Scarpa's drawings it is obvious that he conceived of his designs in multiple spatial orientations, as layered plans with several different elevations, sections and perspectival views; and the complexity of his finished works is testament to the fact that they were envisaged as complex spatialities and never as a mere arrangement of planes. To achieve this complexity, no simple calculation was possible; as a given design evolved, he discovered new relations to create the whole. As Damisch notes, although Wright was a model for Scarpa, their methods of drawing were very different. For Wright, drawings were representations of his finished works, whereas:

Scarpa's approach was completely dominated by, paradoxically, the problem of *realization*. From this viewpoint, it seems that the Venetian architect's attitude has curious similarity to that of [Paul] Cézanne. Scarpa harbored the same doubts as Cézanne, if we believe what [Maurice] Merleau-Ponty tells us. And it is this doubt, clearly methodological, that gives his work, seemingly so modest, a historical incisiveness that some consider extraordinary. Now this doubt can be grasped best of all by examining the record of his practice as a draftsman. Herein lies the interest surrounding his drawings, and the ... fact that any analysis of Scarpa's work and discussion of it leads logically and necessarily to the question of his drawings. It is as if we are confronted by an inevitable and perhaps insoluble enigma ... [These are] drawings conceived to be read by others and to back up a demonstration of intent.³⁵

Drawing thus functioned for Scarpa not only for construction purposes but as a tool for seeing; it was a constant aid, as it is for many artists, for drawings help to make understood the many phases of perception.

The intricate ways in which Scarpa designed joints, mostly realised in metal, are also witness to his keen sense of line and form and how they relate three-dimensionally. As Frampton has noted, in Scarpa:

everything turns on the joint to such an extent that ... the joint is the generator rather than the plan not only in respect to the whole but also with regard to alternative solutions lying latent ... these alternatives arise spontaneously from Scarpa's method, his habit of drawing in relief, wherein an initial charcoal sketch on card, one of his famous *cartoni*, becomes progressively elaborated.³⁶

As may be now be evident, it is difficult to talk of a Scarpa work all at once, as a singular unit. And it is joints that, like those in the human body, bring together the multitude of elements to create a whole. Scarpa's joints may also refer to the complex techniques of naval knots. There is certainly a relationship between Scarpa's drawings, where different aspects of a building are related to each other through a variety of lines and superimpositions, and his joints, which are modelled differently according to placement and the material they join. Often, these joints may give the appearance of being aesthetic ornaments; this is true of many structural elements of Scarpa's constructions, which may look ornamental but are primarily structural. The way the metal pieces of the joint encircle or connect to each other is similar to how Scarpa drew his often winding lines.

Many of Scarpa's interventions, as they contribute to the construction of space, can be enjoyed as ornament and furnish the whole with a fine finish. As well as the textural differences of stone, specially designed tesserae and mosaics in pavements, walls and painted panels in carefully chosen colours, and the joints, metal frames and even nails and screws in Scarpa's work can be appreciated as ornament. As the historian of Islamic art Oleg Grabar wrote in *The Mediation of Ornament* (1955), '[ornament] ... alone among the forms of art is primarily, if not uniquely, endowed with the property of carrying beauty and of providing pleasure'.³⁷ This claim would have rung true for Scarpa, evidenced by the fact that Byzantine art was one of his inspirations. Living in Venice, the Byzantine influences visible in St Mark's Basilica, with its ornate facade and golden mosaics, enliven the atmosphere of the entire square both during the day and at night. The use of shimmering gold and the bright colours of the marbles reappear in the works of Scarpa in the form of mosaics and glazed surfaces.

Ornament, besides being a quality of Venetian Baroque and Byzantine art, was also adopted by Scarpa from Viennese Secession architecture and painting, and he was especially inspired by the work of the architect-designers Josef Hoffmann and Otto Wagner as well as the ornamental art and interiors of Gustav Klimt. As the Secessionists reformed the notion of applied and decorative arts at the turn of the twentieth century, so the fine crafts of carpentry and cabinetmaking, among others, were turned into an art in the hands of Scarpa and can be found in many details of his architecture and installations. His affinity with the Viennese school and with Hoffmann in particular also contributed to his furniture designs. In a 2012 documentary on Scarpa directed by Gian Luigi Calderone, Scarpa's son Tobia, also an architect, describes his father as someone who could fall in love with a piece of stone.³⁸

Scarpa's fascination with Frank Lloyd Wright also in part stems from how the elder architect integrated ornament into his practice, in elements such as stained or leaded glass and wall reliefs with architectural elements. The influences of the Viennese school, Art Nouveau and the later Art Deco movements can be seen in Wright as well as Scarpa, although the former's embrace of the forms of nature and plant life nonetheless differs from the strictly abstracted, geometric approach of Scarpa. It was rather Klee who constituted the more direct influence on Scarpa with his sense of colour and movement, as seen in the floor mosaics of the Olivetti Showroom, among others. Tafuri has elaborated on the similarity of the work of Scarpa to the paintings of Klee.³⁹

Exhibition Design

Scarpa was involved in exhibitions from his early years, first with the glass works that he made for Venini as well as the exhibition halls and display windows he created for the firm. In 1937 he became friends with the art dealer Carlo Cardazzo, who had a gallery and introduced Scarpa to the art circle in Venice. With commissions such as designing the presentations of Arturo Martini and Paul Klee at the Venice Biennale in 1942 and 1948, respectively, and the 1956 Mondrian exhibition at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome, Scarpa established himself as one of the most important exhibition designers of his time. His involvement with the Venice Biennale and his renovation work at Venice's Museo Correr (1952–53, 1957–60) and Gallerie dell'Accademia (1945–59) furnished him with a deep knowledge of art that led to his crowning achievement in the exhibition and restoration work at the Castelvecchio.

As with many of his works, these projects involved Scarpa in the crafting of metal joints and supports, which he designed for hanging and displaying paintings and sculptures. It also brought to the fore the subject of planes and surfaces as well as wall colouring and texture. Scarpa had very clear ideas about what made a good exhibition space and how to use light, both natural and artificial. In an interview with Martin Dominguez, he described the importance of the pavement in giving character to space – 'The paving is one of the key surfaces in defining the geometry of a room ... The objects to be displayed have to be arranged accurately on the paving, to avoid any interference with the geometry of the rooms' – as well as expressing the idea that depth is created not by perspective but rather by the placement of artworks and by light.⁴⁰ This is obvious in the exhibition spaces at Castelvecchio: on the ground floor, both the grey pavement and the dark stone pedestals on which the large sculptures stand emphasise the modelling of the figures, with the light coming from the windows in contrast to the grey floor. As is especially evident in the upper galleries at Castelvecchio, Scarpa's exhibition spaces are never crowded and each artwork has its own physical breathing room to bring out its individual qualities.

For Scarpa, not every work that was exhibited had to be perfect; the responsibility of the designer in arranging them was to be able to identify the most interesting or beautiful aspects of a given artwork and to arrange its display in such a way as to make that evident. Whatever the artwork on display, Scarpa's exhibitions had the added effect of emphasising the aesthetic qualities of the work, arranging the display so as to draw the observer's awareness to these aspects. According to the architect Roberto Scichilone, Scarpa's work at the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia in Palermo (1953–54) is an example of 'giving depth with different reliefs and different highlight[s], supporting a culture and a personal taste that complement each other ... By showing something else, he hides what he does not like.'⁴¹

As a hermeneutic approach, Scarpa's architecture possesses the critical capacity of making one understand that the art object is made visible by means of architecture, and vice versa.⁴² This is the magic of his museum and gallery interventions, which combine contrasting angles and positions and juxtapose the different qualities of works; in so doing, they also become a figurative critique of many works of contemporary architecture where repetition becomes cumbersome. Scarpa's knowledge of and insight into how to most effectively design an exhibition was also aided by his intimate experience of the artworks themselves: he would often touch and weigh them in his hands or caress the surfaces of sculptures that would be exhibited. Such tactile experiences certainly added to his visual capacity.

Scarpa and Japan

Naturally the artist I most admired and who taught me most was ... Josef Hoffmann. In Hoffmann there is a profound expression of the sense of decoration ... The reason for all this is very simple: essentially I am a Byzantine and Hoffmann, basically, had a somewhat Oriental character – the character of the European who looks towards the Orient.⁴³

Scarpa's fascination with Japan must have been related to its traditional aesthetic practice of combining the natural with the artificial and, especially in its modern architecture, the traditional and the contemporary, because in Scarpa's work it is often these dialectical relations that produce the identity of the object. The intimately tactile quality in Scarpa's work also echoes Japanese aesthetics, where, for example, a ceramic cup is usually not absolutely round, and one has to touch it to fully grasp its delicate form. As in Japanese aesthetics, Scarpa's world is woven of contrasts and discrepancies. He joins the hard and the soft, the dark and the light, the sharp and the smooth, and in each execution this bringing together creates a new whole. The entrance to the IUAV architecture school with its sliding doors, cornices and repeated mouldings is a singular work of art in itself, not unlike the relationship between the natural and man-made, the organic and the highly refined, which combine to form a dynamic unity, that may be discerned in the traditional approach to Japanese aesthetics.

Another aspect of Scarpa's design is the richness he was able to imbue in a limited space. In his teaching, he often used the example of small Japanese gardens, each with fountain, water and greenery, to convey his thoughts.⁴⁴ Such an observation can indeed make us aware of the fact that most of Scarpa's designs were executed in limited spaces; even the spacious Brion Tomb can be visually contained from one vantage point.

In his book on Scarpa, Sergio Los emphasises how his architecture works as a symbolic system, an architectural language, that functions as a means to understand or produce a lived reality, rather than the object being the intention or endpoint.⁴⁵ As Los claims, conceiving of architecture in this way runs contrary to the common assumption that the object is what offers reality or the knowledge thereof. The emphasis on lived reality and its ephemeral and changing quality, particularly with the effects of time, light and movement, is not unlike the ideas embodied in Japanese aesthetics, where, rather than the object itself, its living quality and relationship to the transitory is stressed.⁴⁶

The Japanese postwar architect Arata Isozaki, in his text on Scarpa entitled 'What Was the Last Dream of Carlo Scarpa?', finds a symbolic resemblance between the great haiku poet of the seventeenth century Matsuo Bashō and Scarpa, noting that instead of visiting prominent places like Kyoto or Nara in the southern part of Japan's main island, known for their significant surviving examples of traditional architecture, Scarpa travelled to Sendai, in the north, not known for having remarkable architecture. Sendai was along the same 'narrow road to the deep north' that Bashō had famously taken.

Isozaki noted: 'The resemblance between Scarpa's work and the careful arrangement of the *machiya* [traditional wooden townhouses] of Kyoto derives, in my view, from the precise combination of materials in each ... He must have discovered through his travels in the farthest end of the East anonymous architecture quite akin to his own work.'⁴⁷

Scarpa's visit to Sendai – on his second trip to Japan in 1978 – is emblematic of this spiritual affinity, which inspired him to travel in the footsteps of Bashō. His unfortunate death there may also be interpreted symbolically, since, as Isozaki notes, 'For the Japanese, a journey had a special symbolic meaning – a visit to another world.'⁴⁸

Time and Space: Rites of Passage

The experience of any Scarpa work places us in the passage of time, in the past as well as in the future, through historical references and innovation. Sculptural details like joints or coloured glazes, or even entire works, reveal signs of the process of their making, their relationship to time and to those who observe or occupy them; they are like animated souls alive to our gaze. Scarpa, many of whose works are palimpsests – whether in his layering of elements, materials and spaces or in the temporal complexity of his renovation projects – becomes like a magician, imbuing his constructions with new life. Temporality becomes manifest in dynamic ways through the manner in which Scarpa creates relations between details. In the Brion Tomb, we find ourselves in a landscape of memory and expectation: archetypal forms, cave-like spaces, water channels, reflections, inclined walls, openings in the form of interlocking circles, and myriad colours under the great arch or in the use of tesserae on walls, reflecting light, lead one through an odyssey between life and the mysterious beyond. Scarpa's drawings, too, which reflect layered and superimposed ideas executed in various materials, with thin and thick lines on opaque and transparent papers, are like the labyrinthine landscapes that he executed around and within his buildings. As in his drawings, his spaces take us on a journey of surprising turns, winding staircases, corridors and unexpected passages. In the Castelvecchio Museum, Scarpa created several circulation patterns, each of which creates a different relation to time and space. In the great hall on the ground floor, where the sequence of layered halls leads forwards and produces in the visitor a sense of expectation as to where we are being led, we proceed ahead, viewing the installed works on both sides, each one illuminated differently, sometimes against the light, offering a silhouette, or with side lighting to reveal a worn-out texture. In other rooms, we proceed up and around, or down a narrow corridor, with seemingly unrelated sequences creating a dreamlike wandering. We look up and are surprised to discover a medieval equestrian sculpture, or, looking higher, we find our gaze moving along the multiple layers and different materials of the roof. It is obvious that Scarpa wanted his architecture to create an alternative world of poetry and beauty.

The idea of time as a motor of evolution was introduced in the West during the Enlightenment. The concept of history as a chronicle of events was replaced by historicism as an evolutionary series involving linear progression and forward movement. However, it was in the late nineteenth and especially the twentieth century that time came to be understood as a factor driving movement and memory and as an instigator of change. The trauma of the First World War and the upheaval it brought across the globe made visible and visceral the reality of constant change. Scarpa's life, too, evolved in a world in continual movement: although he had a stable family life and lived mostly in the Veneto, he moved cities and residences many times. For a poet and artist to be, life in the first decades of the twentieth century was one of constant mutation and alteration.

In Scarpa's installations, objects function as temporal maps. They are so placed as to reveal their history in contrast or relation to other objects, and our movement in viewing these objects becomes a movement in time. In the garden of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, the orientation of the objects leads us from one to the other, creating a flow of time, aided by the flow of the water channelling in diverse patterns and ending in a spiralling pool.

This experience of moving in space and time also unfolds multiple vistas and symbolisms, creating manifold layers of meaning and reference; one is reminded of Dante's vision in Canto XXX of the *Paradiso*, where fantastic images unfold as the layers of a vast rose. Scarpa's works, leading us from one experience to the next, from one aesthetic moment to another, offer constant variety in relationship. In many traditional museum designs, space opens up in front of the visitor as they move from one object

to the next, inviting them to progress further and creating a perspective with no end. In the Castelvechio, however, every path leads in a new direction and what is offered to vision is multiperspectival, drawing the eye up, down and beyond. Scarpa's vistas are constantly changing and multiplying.

The architect's use of light, particularly the exposure of his spaces to the sun's rays at different times of the day and in different seasons, also creates a reference to time that is cardinal in his work, as previously mentioned. But Scarpa's creations also relate not only to history but to his uniquely individual sense of time. This personal sense of temporality makes itself felt in all his works, sometimes by the circulation through his buildings and sometimes by the extension of shadows and the reflection of lights. For the Canova plaster gallery, about which he said that he had 'cut out the blue of the sky', we feel a timeless extension to a sky with boundless depth that likewise enters the museum space and in which we can lose ourselves.⁴⁹

One enigmatic example of the way Scarpa's buildings articulate different ideas of time is the Roman door, mentioned earlier, that he set into the ground beyond the entrance gate at IUAV. The classical object, repurposed with a new function and in a different context and orientation, becomes a thing of the present, travelling from beyond to address us as a newcomer. In a lecture given in Madrid in 1978, Scarpa said: 'I'd like some critic to discover in my works certain intentions I've always had. I mean an immense desire to belong inside tradition.'⁵⁰ However, it is simultaneously the case that Scarpa's works always appear modern and never without relation to the present. For the architect, remaining within tradition meant having a sense of reality and beauty that the modern age no longer preserved; as he put it: 'Modern architecture, abstractly stereometric, destroys all sensitivity to framework and de-composition. We have created a void around things.'⁵¹ Venice was a society built upon craft traditions; it could not sever its relation to the Gothic and Baroque passion for detail, colour and lustre. Scarpa's heightened sensitivity to detail, to the precision of application, meant searching for methods and knowledge that may no longer have had a use in modern architecture but which would, in his work, act always to create new experiences. Doors that slide mechanically to open, windows positioned within layers of dentils, mosaic pieces placed in recesses so as to be discovered by surprise – such elements give his works a mnemonic aura.⁵²

Scarpa's Legacy

Just as we provide for our necessities, so it seems logical to provide for beauty.⁵³

Scarpa's works attest to a deep and inclusive educating force that resists the commodifying effects of the modern culture industry; 'The environment educates in a critical fashion,' he said.⁵⁴ In this sense, encountering Scarpa today is to experience spaces of refinement and distillation in a world where growth, quantity and excessive show have become blinding.

Many architects and critics wrote in praise of Scarpa, though there were others who questioned whether he was truly an architect. Bruno Zevi, in a text in which he gives many examples of Scarpa's genius, concludes by asking, 'is Scarpa really an architect?' – for him, Scarpa was not an architect but an artist.⁵⁵ As Scarpa's contemporary the Italian architect Ignazio Gardella wrote:

Certainly [Scarpa] was an architect in the fullest and indeed the original sense of the term, i.e. a commander, in charge of construction, not merely a subaltern skilled in tactical operations ... Everything had to be wrought up to the highest level of style: the work of architecture, but also the architectural drawing, the shape of a door handle or a hinge, the color of a tie ... Yet to Scarpa a shadow which would reveal the shape of a molding was just as important as the proportions of a room ... I feel that Scarpa's architecture is impossible to imitate ... His architecture is too personal an invention, being born anew on each occasion, and unshackled by any programmatic scheme that can be codified ... [It is capable] of communicating to those who appreciate his works an extraordinary emotional resonance.⁵⁶

As these quotes from his colleagues demonstrate, Scarpa's attention to detail, to 'furnishings', to the finery of colours and textures, triggered a great deal of controversy as to his position within the field of architecture. Some, like Manfredo Tafuri, accepted him unquestioningly as an outstanding architect, while others, like Rafael Moneo, went

so far as to say that he was a 'Venetian painter', referring of course to his love of colour and light, like Titian.⁵⁷ The 1980s still put up definite boundaries between professions, which is no longer the case today, when to accept continuities between fields of interest has become the norm. Thus one of the most rewarding aspects of Scarpa's architecture is the way in which the seemingly most insignificant detail of a design can educate one in the love of exploration and experiment. The philosopher Martin Heidegger's concept of art seems appropriate to describe Scarpa's architecture in its historical references and its poetry: 'Art happens as poetry. Poetry is founding in the triple sense of bestowing, grounding and beginning. Art, as founding, is essentially historical!'⁵⁸ Scarpa's works place us in contact with the presence of historical time and our engagement with it. Any contact with Scarpa's creations will inevitably not only make one aware of the deep care and love of art that went into them but, with an almost infectious effect, lead one to wish to explore further our relations to our environment and to the essence of life as it exists in beauty.

OVERLEAF. Lower part of the main facade of the Banca Popolare di Verona.

Notes

- 1 Paul Valéry, 'Four Fragments from *Eupalinos, or The Architect*', trans. William McC. Stewart, in *Paul Valéry: Selected Writings* (New York, 1964), p. 175.
- 2 Guido Beltramini and Italo Zannier, *Carlo Scarpa: Architecture and Design* (New York, 2006), pp. 290–95.
- 3 Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944–1985* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 111.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–15.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 7 Sergio Los, *Carlo Scarpa* (Cologne, 1994), p. 26.
- 8 Sergio Los, *Carlo Scarpa: guida all'architettura* (Venice, 1995), p. 16.
- 9 G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox, vol. II (Oxford, 1998), Part III, ch. 3, pp. 684ff.
- 10 Carlo Scarpa, 'A Thousand Cypresses', lecture given in Madrid (summer 1978) [probably at the ID Gallery, where he held an exhibition], in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Francesco Dal Co and Giuseppe Mazzariol (New York, 1984), p. 286.
- 11 Gian Luigi Calderone, dir., *Carlo Scarpa: fuori dal paradiso – testimonianze* (Pentagram Stiftung / Le Stanze del Vetro, 2012), DVD.
- 12 Los, *Carlo Scarpa: guida all'architettura*, p. 89. See also Vincent Scully, 'Between Wright and Louis Kahn', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 267; and Los, *Carlo Scarpa*, pp. 12–13.
- 13 Le Corbusier cited in Fernand Braudel, 'Venedik' [Venice], in *Akdeniz, İnsanlar ve Miras* [The Mediterranean: People and Heritage], trans. Aykut Derman (Istanbul, 1977), p. 126, translation by the author. Braudel writes: 'In order to support the weight of Venice, it was necessary to recreate this soil, to strengthen it with stones, furthermore, to support it with thousands, millions of tree trunks that were dug into the earth. Venice rises on a forest that is buried in water ... Venice is a miracle, at least a city which amazes people: here time does not flow as it does elsewhere. As though subjected to a sorcery, Venice has stayed outside of time.' Braudel stresses that in Venice one moves by walking, and this has a distinct effect on the way one perceives the environment. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 14 Carlo Scarpa quoted in Kenneth Frampton, 'Carlo Scarpa and the Adoration of the Joint', in *Studies in Tectonic Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 305.
- 15 Manfredo Tafuri, 'Carlo Scarpa and Italian Architecture', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 90. Here 'figure' and 'figurative' are used in a broad sense, referring to symbols, organic shapes and varied applications of form that refer to nature.
- 16 Carlo Scarpa, 'Furnishings', address delivered for the inauguration of the academic year at IUAV, Venice (1964–65), in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 282.
- 17 Hubert Damisch, *Noah's Ark* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 1–25.
- 18 Los, *Carlo Scarpa*, p. 98.
- 19 Mario Gemin, conversation with the author, April 2022.
- 20 George Ranalli, 'The Coherence of a Quest', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, pp. 259–60.
- 21 Pasquale Lovero, 'Artist's Proofs (Unnumbered)', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 224.
- 22 Philippe Duboy, 'Scarpa/Matisse: Crosswords', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 170.
- 23 Raffaella Vendramin, 'Carlo Scarpa's Library', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 307. Dante was exiled from Florence and settled in Ravenna, and was buried in Rimini.
- 24 Scarpa, 'A Thousand Cypresses', p. 286.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 287.
- 26 Franca Semi, *A lezione con Carlo Scarpa* (Milan, 2021), pp. 31, 169, 197, 231.
- 27 Scarpa, 'Furnishings', p. 282.
- 28 Leo Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane: A Study in Multiple Form and Architectural Symbolism* (New York, 1977), pp. 15–17.
- 29 Frampton, 'Carlo Scarpa and the Adoration of the Joint', p. 299.
- 30 Scully, 'Between Wright and Louis Kahn', p. 267.
- 31 Boris Podrecca, 'A Viennese Point of View', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, pp. 241–42.
- 32 Dante, *The Divine Comedy, III: Paradise*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (London, 1962), p. 180.
- 33 Carlo Bertelli, 'Light and Design', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 191.
- 34 Scarpa's drawings are in the collections of family members, the archives of the Castelvecchio Museum and those of the Museo Correr in Venice, the archives of the Museo Civici di Treviso, and many private collections.
- 35 Hubert Damisch, 'The Drawings of Carlo Scarpa', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 209.
- 36 Frampton, 'Carlo Scarpa and the Adoration of the Joint', p. 307.
- 37 Oleg Grabar quoted in Jed Perl, 'The Clamor of Ornament: Exchange, Power and Joy from the Fifteenth Century to the Present', *New York Review of Books* 69, no. 13 (18 August 2022), p. 18.
- 38 Calderone, dir., *Carlo Scarpa: fuori dal paradiso*.
- 39 Tafuri, 'Carlo Scarpa and Italian Architecture', pp. 86, 89.
- 40 Martin Dominguez, 'Interview with Carlo Scarpa' (Vicenza, May 1978), in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 298.
- 41 Roberto Scichilone, 'Installation by Carlo Scarpa at Galleria Nazionale della Sicilia in Palazzo Abatellis', *ARKT-Space to Architecture*, <https://arkt.space/en/installation-by-carlo-scarpa-at-galleria-nazionale-della-sicilia-in-palazzo-abatellis>, 7 November 2021.
- 42 Los, *Carlo Scarpa: guida all'architettura*, pp. 8–11.
- 43 Scarpa, 'Furnishings', p. 282.
- 44 Semi, *A lezione con Carlo Scarpa*, p. 103.
- 45 Los, *Carlo Scarpa: guida all'architettura*, p. 7.
- 46 For the particular qualities of Japanese aesthetics, see for example Jale N. Erzen, 'Tadao Ando in the Light of Japanese Aesthetics', *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 21, nos. 1–2 (2004), pp. 67–80.
- 47 Arata Isozaki, 'What Was the Last Dream of Carlo Scarpa?', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 220.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 Carlo Scarpa, 1981, quoted in Beltramini and Zannier, *Carlo Scarpa*, p. 114.
- 50 Scarpa, 'A Thousand Cypresses', p. 287.
- 51 Scarpa, 'Furnishings', p. 282.
- 52 Ludovico Quaroni, 'Scarpa's "Lessons"', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, pp. 252–55.
- 53 Scarpa, 'Furnishings', p. 282.
- 54 Scarpa, 'A Thousand Cypresses', p. 286.
- 55 Bruno Zevi, 'Beneath or Beyond Architecture', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, pp. 271–72.
- 56 Ignazio Gardella, 'The Gamin', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, pp. 214–15.
- 57 Rafael Moneo, 'Representation of the Eye', in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Dal Co and Mazzariol, p. 236.
- 58 Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1936), in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (Chicago, IL, 1976), p. 699.

THE COMPLETE BUILDINGS





AULA MARIO BARATTO, CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY

Venice, Italy, 1935–37; 1955–56

One of Scarpa's earliest restoration projects was the 1935–37 renovation of Ca' Foscari University, in which he opened up the view on to the Grand Canal in numerous places as well as designing new furnishings for the rectory and offices. He also redesigned the Great Hall (Aula Magna) on the second floor – now the Aula Mario Baratto – where he created wooden fittings and a new frame for the Gothic window. Twenty years later, he was invited to make a second intervention, this time to convert the same room into a lecture hall. Scarpa's work here displays a masterly use of wood, which he used to create a complex screen of wood and metal joints that separates the hall from the entrance. The Gothic windows overlooking the Grand Canal are also separated from the room by a second layer of wood and glass framing. As Scarpa explained, 'I was concerned to explore the relations with the outside world through the apertures and internal layout of space. This is why the wooden pillars are juxtaposed to windows.'¹

The dividing screen was created from wood reclaimed from Scarpa's earlier restoration project; the vertical columns with their expressive layered design terminating in Y-shaped struts support the wooden beams and gratings of the ceiling. The glazed structure has moveable cloth-covered wood panels that can be closed in order to screen off the lecture hall. The simple seating and the elevated stage with chairs and table were also designed by the architect. A year after Scarpa's death in 1978, a fire ravaged the hall, but it was restored in 1983 by Valeriano Pastor (1927–2023) to Scarpa's exact design.

¹ Martin Dominguez, 'Interview with Carlo Scarpa' (Vicenza, May 1978), in *Carlo Scarpa: The Complete Works*, ed. Francesco Dal Co and Giuseppe Mazzariol (New York, 1984), p. 269.





