Fellowship proposal, the Pulitzer maintains an extensive on-line catalog at http://mattaclark.pulitzerarts.org.

Dana Buntrock

Notes
2. Quoted in Carinne Discernes, ed., Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p. 120.

Palladio, el Arquitecto, 1508–1580
Caixa Forum, Madrid
October 6, 2009–January 17, 2010

Palladio and His Legacy: A Transatlantic Journey
Morgan Library & Museum, New York
April 2–August 1, 2010

The 500th anniversary of the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio’s birth in 1508 served as the inspiration for a traveling exhibition that found two of its manifestations in spanking new architectural venues. The principal galleries of Madrid’s Caixa Forum, designed by Herzog and de Meuron and inaugurated in 2008, were the setting for “Palladio, el Arquitecto,” an exhibition of Palladio’s drawings alongside books, paintings, models, period objects, and even an animated film exploring the role of drawing in the architect’s theory and practice. Across the Atlantic, a smaller selection of Palladio’s drawings was displayed more serenely in one of the new galleries designed by Renzo Piano for the Morgan Library & Museum opened in 2006. Despite the contrasting venues, Palladio was the star in both places and his work revealed its lasting modernity.

Shown first in Vicenza in 2008, the Palladio exhibition, organized by the Royal Academy of Arts in London and the Centro Internazionale Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio (CISA), morphed as it travelled to London and Barcelona before arriving in Madrid. The curators of the original exhibition included the renowned Palladio scholars Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns, in addition to MaryAnne Stevens of the Royal Academy. For the Madrid exhibition, Fernando Marías and Charles Hind were contributors and, in New York, where the exhibition was pared down to a group of thirty-one drawings from the Royal Institute of British Architects with supplementary objects, the curators were Hind, Irena Murray, and Calder Loth. The accompanying catalog has appeared in three variations and four languages: Italian, English, Spanish, and Catalan. It is richly illustrated with high quality images and provides new scholarship on Palladio from leading scholars in Renaissance architectural history. The version accompanying the exhibition was pared down to a group of thirty-one drawings from the Royal Institute of British Architects with supplementary objects, the curators were Hind, Irena Murray, and Calder Loth. The accompanying catalog has appeared in three variations and four languages: Italian, English, Spanish, and Catalan. It is richly illustrated with high quality images and provides new scholarship on Palladio from leading scholars in Renaissance architectural history. The version accompanying the exhibition offers a brief version of this research along with additional essays focusing attention on Palladio’s impact in the United States, including a lively introduction to the topic by the eminent architectural historian James Ackerman.

Although Herzog and de Meuron’s Caixa Forum could never be confused as Palladian, its large galleries provided an ideal setting for a tightly packed, yet free-flowing display of objects. Intimacy was achieved in the galleries via the use of dark ochre paint on the walls, so that the impact of relatively small drawings was not lost in the proximity of large-scale, wood models and image projections onto partition walls. Indeed, the overriding theme of the exhibition was the centrality of drawing in the architect’s design process, and the viewer stood to learn much from the artful installation. In a couple of instances, the material suffered from spatial constriction, as when Palladio’s studies of Giulio Romano’s rustication for the Palazzo Thiene, his early villa designs, and his project for the Basilica in Vicenza, each defined as a separate topic by the wall text, converged in a single gallery corner. Although imposing, a large model of the Basilica, made in 1976, worked to great effect in offering the public a sense of the three-dimensional nature of the architecture rendered on paper. These drawings remained the heart of the show. For any viewer coming face to face with them for the first time, they were a revelation.

The ephemeral quality of Palladio’s sketches fully captures the excitement of an idea in the making. His pen and ink studies of the Baths of Agrippa, for instance, record a repetition of circles and lines on paper, defining solid forms and denying them at the same time. By 1570, the architect produced fully formed plans and elevations of the same baths detailing his meticulous reconstruction of their ruins. The resulting images are comparable to those of the Baths of Diocletian from the 1540s shown in New York and illustrated here (Figure 1). In addition to rapidly produced studies, the Madrid exhibition also included many finished drawings ready for presentation to a patron. Palladio’s alternative designs for the Rialto Bridge in Venice—displayed in drawings by the architect and a digital reconstruction prepared by a team at the University of Venice led by Beltramini—reveal his savvy in trying to win over a powerful patron as well as the wide range of possibilities the classical language offered this architect who was fully steeped in its principles and creative potential.

The Madrid exhibition succeeded in its goal to provide a complete picture of Palladio’s design theory and practice, including even a scale drawing by the architect made for a stonemason to shape a comice for the church of San Giorgio Maggiore. Another stand-out inclusion was a magnificent though little seen painting by El Greco, The Immaculate Conception (ca. 1585, Museo de Santa Cruz, Toledo). The painting includes a Palladian building in the background, but more importantly it situates both architect and painter within a broad
milieu of artistic exchange across media and geography. El Greco’s painting appeared in a section of the exhibition devoted to the impact of Palladio’s architecture through print, and most importantly via his 1570 publication, *I Quattro Libri dell’Architettura*. In Vicenza and London, the exhibition ended with works by Inigo Jones and Lord Burlington in England, projects by Giacomo Quarenghi for Russian patrons, and Le Corbusier sketches after Palladio from the Album La Roche (1921–1922, CISA, Vicenza) to flesh out the theme of Palladio’s influence. For the Madrid exhibition, the neoclassical architect Juan de Villanueva rounded out the display in a not-so-successful grouping of images derived from Madrid collections. It should be noted that the true stars of local collections, including masterworks by Villanueva, were on display concurrently at the Biblioteca Nacional in an exhibition devoted to Spanish architectural drawings of the eighteenth century. Villanueva’s presence, however, small, was justified in the Palladio show, given the location of the Caixa Forum immediately adjacent to two of the architect’s signature projects, the Royal Botanical Garden and the Prado Museum.

At the Morgan Library & Museum, the exhibition “Palladio and His Legacy: A Transatlantic Journey” highlighted a select group of drawings by the architect along with a brief consideration of American Palladianism that, unfortunately, came across as something of an afterthought. Divided into four principal themes, with eight sub-themes, the exhibition was displayed in a single gallery. A section devoted to Antiquity included early studies of ruins, primarily in Rome, and Palladio’s drawings after Vitruvius. Floor to ceiling height cut-outs of columns in the five principle orders according to Palladio were used to mark transitions between themes and sub-themes, suggesting a vastly different budget at work than what was available for the Madrid installation. And so, the Ionic order introduced the second principal theme of Palladio’s projects, some of which were only envisioned and others built. Sketches and finished drawings were displayed alongside a few well-selected small-scale models. A third section titled “Spreading the Word” explored the impact of the *Quattro Libri* and other unpublished works by Palladio, albeit only briefly and in a small amount of space.

One got a sense of English Palladianism from this latter section, but the phenomenon’s explanation lacked the detail necessary before the transition to the exhibition’s final theme, Palladio’s legacy in the United States. Examples of American architecture were primarily represented in photographs and by handsome plaster models made by Timothy Richards, along with several drawings by Thomas Jefferson. The story of American Palladianism is an interesting one, but its brief presentation at the Morgan left the viewer with a superficial introduction to the subject, focused more on Beaux-Arts examples of government buildings than on Palladian buildings per se.

For the first month of “Palladio and His Legacy,” the Morgan visitor could contemplate the work of Palladio’s compatriots and many contemporaries in another exhibition of drawings dedicated to “Rome after Raphael” held just downstairs in the Annex Building galleries inaugurated in 1928. Designed by Benjamin Wistar Morris, these earlier galleries are among the finest spaces for viewing drawings in New York. Yet, they work best for large shows and thus the display of a
small number of Palladio drawings was well served by Piano’s small and slightly understated gallery. This reviewer’s only complaint concerns circulation in the gallery, as one could enter the exhibition from a side door and wholly miss the introductory wall text, thereby unnecessarily complicating the experience of the small exhibition. Once on track, however, the intimate setting encouraged the quiet contemplation seemingly demanded by Piano’s architecture.

Herzog and de Meuron’s loud Caixa Forum could not be more different. It is the most exciting new cultural space in a city filled with great cultural institutions. Inaugural exhibitions have included contemporary work by artists such as Anselm Kiefer and Cindy Sherman, highlights of the Aga Khan collection of Islamic art, and a retrospective of Richard Rogers + Architects. Palladio, it turns out, fits right in with this company. “Palladio, el Arquitecto” revealed for visitors the working method of an architect who learned from drawing and from the past. With this knowledge, Palladio charted a course of architectural experimentation that has produced the very Madrid building in which his work was on display. And yet, in his polished reworking of ruins on paper and radical transformation of them in print, Palladio can also be seen as a model for Piano’s subdued elegance at the Morgan. Indeed, after five hundred years, Palladio is revealed to be as modern as he ever was.

Jesús Escobar

What We Learned: The Las Vegas Studio and The Work of Venturi Scott Brown & Associates

The Las Vegas Studio, curated by Hilar Stadler and Martino Stierli, Museum im Bellpark Kriens, Switzerland

The Work of Venturi Scott Brown and Associates, curated by Dean Sakamoto, Yale School of Architecture Gallery, New Haven, CT

October 29, 2009–February 5, 2010

By the time Robert Venturi returned to Yale in 1966 as Davenport Visiting Professor, he was already an anti-establishment figure. His Vanna Venturi House (Philadelphia, 1962) was an early example of emerging post-modernism, its colliding fragments of traditional and twentieth-century forms—such the gabled roof and the ribbon window—was a case study in the “both⁄and” equivocation that he would eventually formulate in Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (Museum of Modern Art, 1966). Returning again in 1968 as an advanced studio instructor at Yale, where modernism had flourished under the tutelage of Louis Kahn and the leadership of Paul Rudolph before the latter was succeeded by Charles Moore, Venturi and partner Denise Scott Brown found themselves in particularly supportive environment to attack the modernist academy from within, while making use of that very studio culture to advance new sensibilities about how architecture and urbanism might be researched and ultimately produced after modernism.

Meanwhile, 2600 miles away from the architectural academy, Las Vegas had also developed a reputation for the unorthodox: an urban anomaly that was nevertheless an exemplar of America’s love affair with the automobile and the sprawl that had come to characterize the cities of the American West. Perhaps identifying with the misfit nature of the city, Venturi and Scott Brown embraced Las Vegas as an alternative to a post-war modernism they considered exhausted and out of touch. In its brazen commercialism and architectural pragmatism, the built environment of Las Vegas found expression in billboards rather than building facades, its open spaces defined as parking lots rather than piazzas. What’s more, the commercial architecture

1. View of gallery showing installation of What We Learned. (Photo courtesy of Yale Media Services.)