

Aldo Rossi

theorist of architecture and art
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Aldo Rossi was a great architect, artist, and theorist. In his lifetime he led the post modern movement and through that derived new meanings of form and how to emotionally express them.

Rossi grew up during World War II and was studying the field as many other architects turned to other design occupations. Despite this dip in their economy many architects developed their own individual and innovative philosophies and ideas. In 1959 Rossi was a teaching assistant to known architects of the time: Ludovico Quaroni and Carlo Aymonino and graduated under their tutelage. Later on he was also able to work with Ernesto Rogers, a mentor to many architects. It is with Roger's magazine, *Casabella-Continuita*, that Rossi's theology took shape. ("Aldo Rossi: architect biography", retrieved 2008)

As an architect Rossi took advantage of the two main factors that provided many post-war architectural opportunities. The first factor was Italy's phenomena of the 'economic miracle' in which Italy was then able to afford architectural projects. The second was war damage. Many buildings had been bombed and this resulted in a high demand for projects that restored the buildings or replaced them. Rossi entered the field while there was a high demand as well as high competition. The opportunities he took allowed himself and other architects to express the unique ideas that they developed in the war.

As Rossi was now aware with the world's modernist standard through *Casabella* and other new works that were being considered in Italy, he felt the need to break through this "international standard". The international standard, or modernist movement, created buildings that lost meaning due to the mass production of seemingly formulated structures. (Rossi, 1993) This social change encouraged Rossi to develop new ways of viewing architecture. There was a need to break from Modernism and away from a formulaic approach in viewing architectural type.

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Rossi's theology began with Andrea Palladio. Palladio studied the past and analyzed contemporary needs while also deriving timeless and universal principles (Gable, 2004). Though there may be a slight influence of the Russian Constructive movement, Rossi was inspired to analyze architecture in a scientific way as well. Thus resulting in his use of primary shapes and seeing the architecture as a part of the city. Rossi's theory became a leading force for the Tendenza (Neorationalist, or Post-modernist) movement in Italy where many are influenced to "turn to the complexity of the urban realm and sought to understand the way architectural forms responded to changes in historical events." ("Italian Tendenza", retrieved 2008)

Rossi's early obsession with knowledge later became an expression of feeling. Rossi's early work gave hints to his theory between the newer and older parts of a city, and buildings within a form of relation with one another. However, it did not express his view of architecture as images of a city. One of his first works that expressed the relation between architecture, city, and its people was Segrate's town square, built in 1965. He was inspired by the architecture of the Enlightenment and created the monument to express the public space as a place to celebrate community life. More importantly, Rossi built the monument to also make it a gathering place through "creating a scene that was conducive to reflection [and] meditation". (Moneo, 2004)

The Segrate town square showed that Rossi saw architecture as a venue for thought and imagery. Within only a few years, Milan recognized an urgent need for living spaces and commissioned Rossi to construct the Gallaratese quarter in the outskirts of the city. Though Rossi had built large living apartment areas before, he had yet to construct a living area that integrated his theory. The Gallaratese quarter was constructed in a working class district, where it was standard for architecture to "be taken for military barracks". (Moneo, 2004) Rossi embraced this reality of the city and constructed a very plain piece of architecture, but within its beautiful geographical location, it almost acts as a countering image. In this way, it fits within the story of the city, but due to its location, this contrast draws attention to the building while making that single moment beautiful. This building comes to life and affects people in a certain way, much as how the Segrate town square was designed to attract and thus making that area a town square.



Segrate's Town Square



Gallaratese quarter

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In 1971, only 2 years after the Gallarate quarter, came Rossi's most representative work: the expansion of the Cemetery of San Cataldo. The new architecture clearly stands out in style compared to the older building, but in its essence captures the complete feeling of the cemetery. The roofless cubic addition (the Cuneo project) stands as a haunting and empty structure immediately entering the walls of the cemetery. The space around it creates a surreal landscape that emphasizes it as a "storage [space] for forgotten lives, spent lives, [and] history". (Moneo, 2004) This depressing reality, however, is contrasted by something eternal. Through his design Rossi provides an escape from time that is drawn onto the blue sky. This also marks the turning point where Rossi's work emits feelings and his analysis focuses on an emotion of the space. Likewise, the Piccolo Teatro del Mondo in Venice was expressed as an image; where it reflects the impression the city had on him.



Cemetery of San Cataldo



the Cuneo



Teatro del Mondo

Later on, Rossi worked entirely with image to create a collage of forms and emotions. His *Il Conico* and *La Conica* comprised of a tranquil emotion that Rossi states to create a landscape on the tabletop. Objects he designed was able to contain sentiment that is not confined within the "demands that come with architecture". (Moneo, 2004)



drawings

Il Conico

La Conica

The search for aesthetic in form is still visible in current day design, and the many possible areas of exploration are available through technology. In each area of interest, nowadays designers hold the same scientific obsession Rossi had within their specific area. As function changes in architecture, the form remains the same. Likewise, though the context in which contemporary designers work, the thirst and need of knowledge and emotions are still shown.

Rossi was a leader of the post modern movement and created well-designed works that inspired an emotional response in the viewer. This provides his architecture with a timelessness that makes him an amazing architect, artist, and theologian.

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