Mapping Rome: Lessons for Architects

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Arch 407 CRN: 21132; Arch 507 CRN: 21229; 4 Credits
Meeting Time and Place: Tuesday, Thursday from 10:00 to 11:50; Room 279
Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Planning Students welcome

Introduction

This course intends to explore the architectural and urban design legacy of Rome using printed maps and digital software, especially ARCGIS, QGIS and open sourced materials such as Open Street Map.

The underlying premise of the course is that in Rome buildings and the urban fabric are intertwined to such an extent that to study one without the other leaves one with an incomplete understanding of either: of how the two scales of intervention relate and mesh together. "Micro-Urbanism," "Contextualism," and "Figure/Ground" (see below) are three urban design concepts which explore this often complex but fascinating relationship between part and whole. In Rome it is cartography that typically gives the best and most detailed information about this dynamic over time.

See: http://mappingrome.com/
http://nolli.uoregon.edu/
http://vasi.uoregon.edu/

Methodology: Historic Mapping and Digital Tools
The vehicle for our exploration will primarily focus on the rich cartographic history of Rome from the 3rd century AD to the present. No other city in the world has been documented as thoroughly as the city of Rome. This cartographic documentation provides a kind of "time capsule" of how the city evolved over the centuries. Important cartographic milestones include:

Forma Urbis: 203 AD Marble Map of Rome
Pianta di Roma: Giovanni Battista Falda, 1676
Pianta Grande di Roma: Giambattista Nolli, 1748
Forma Urbis Roma: Rodolfo Lanciani, 1901
Aerial Photos of Rome: SARA Nistri, 1920 – 1980
Open Street Map: 2012

Several of the maps above have been digitally remastered through the author's research and brought into "real geographic space" meaning they are extremely accurate: down to centimeters of divergence from the actual city. This enables layering of multiple maps that can be filtered in an infinite number of ways revealing relationships diachronically (over time). These powerful digital tools now available to critically examine the city and its buildings provide architects, urban designers, landscape architects, architectural historians and others with new and exciting ways to learn about the city and its evolution over three millennia.

Lessons for Architects
Although the vehicle for this exploration will be historical the course will also explore transcendent ideas that treat how buildings and urban fabric can inform one another. Key concepts in this portion of our work is the idea of "micro-urbanism" and "contextualism" and "figure/ground". These ideas posit that buildings in Rome—and in ANY urban context—have a special opportunity, not to say obligation, to relate to neighboring buildings and urban patterns, such as streets, squares, natural features, views, etc..

In the 20th century, buildings in Rome have been recorded photographically as beautiful, free-standing objects when in fact they are typically deeply embedded in the city's fabric. Rather than being pure, platonic figures, they are usually deformed, imperfect and contingent without relinquishing their unique and ideal, but qualified, identity. Relating to adjacencies—and giving back to those forces—is an important lesson. This two-way relationship involves the design of SPACE as much as OBJECT therefore the figure/ground drawing (perfected by Nolli) is an especially useful tool, demonstrating that in Rome it is often the design of space, like Piazza Navona or the Campo dei Fiori, that gives identity to places rather than the objects themselves.

This give and take between the circumstantial and the ideal, figure and ground, solid and void, is a dynamic which often plays out in contemporary architectural and urban design so that the lessons found in Rome, once abstracted, can serve as strategies for contemporary work. In this way, the course looks both to history and to possible futures.

Term Project: An Urban Ensemble
Working in teams, students will be required to examine a specific "urban ensemble" in detail, recording the evolution of the site over time while also documenting its current state. Analytical diagrams, (hand and digital) will serve as the media for exploration which will culminate in a class presentation using PowerPoint or equal along with accompanying text.

Periodic readings of print and related websites are also required. A more detailed bibliography will be circulated in class but the websites listed above contain many valuable sources that will become part of our standard reference.

Ancient Rome
Carettoni, G. et al, *La Pianta Marmorea di Roma Antica*, 2 vols.; Roma: 1960
Gatti, G., *Topografia ed edilizia di Roma Antica*, Roma: 1989
Giglioli, G., *Museo della Civiltà Romana*, Roma: 1964
Haselberger, L. *Mapping Augustan Rome*, Portsmouth, R.I.: 2002
Lanciani, R., *Forma Urbis Romae*, Milano: 1893 – 1901
Manacorda, D., Crypta Balbi, Milano: 2001
Nash, E., *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, 1968
Richardson, L., *A new Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore: 1992
Rodgriguez-Almeida, E.R., *Forma Urbis Marmorea*, 2 vols., Roma: 1981

Post-Classical Rome
Insolera, I., Roma Fascista*, Roma*: 2001
Insolera, I., *Roma Moderna: un secolo di storia urbanistica*, Roma:1971
Insolera, I., *Roma: Immagini e realt1à, Roma*: 1980
Krautheimer, R., *Rome: Profile of a City*, Princeton: 1980
Magnuson, T., *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 2 vols., Stockholm: 1982, 1986
Valentini, R. & Zuchetti, G., *Codice Topographico della città di Roma*, Roma: 1940-1953

Map Collections
Frutaz, A.P., *Le Piante di Roma*, Roma: 1962
Marigliani, C. ed., *Le Piante di Roma delle collezioni private*, Roma: 2007