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Bernard Rudofsky: From Images to Architecture

Bernhard Rudofsky: Vom Bild zur Architektur

ABSTRACT

The work of Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) is closely related to vernacular architecture mainly due to the important exhibition *Architecture without Architects* which he organized at the MoMA in New York in 1964 and to the same-title book catalogue, and also thanks to his numerous texts and articles on the subject. Within the Vernacular, the Mediterranean area will remain Rudofsky main reference, following the important experience of living in southern Italy in the 1930s and his study travels to Greece and Asia Minor.

The specific way of understanding and interpreting Mediterranean architecture by Rudofsky is the subject of this paper, which aims at highlighting the instrumental use of the vernacular in the creative architectural process. The topic is developed across the whole work of the architect, that is in his theoretical texts, architectural design projects, and archive images, specifically his travel photographs and watercolours, kept at the Getty Centre (Los Angeles).

Keywords: Bernhard Rudofsky, Vernacular architecture, architecture of the Mediterranean region

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Werk von Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) ist eng mit der Volksarchitektur verbunden, vor allem aufgrund der wichtigen Ausstellung „Architektur ohne Architekten“, die er 1964 im New Yorker MoMA organisiert hat, sowie der gleichnamige Buch-Katalog zur Ausstellung und zahlreich Texte und Artikel, die er zum Thema publiziert hatte. Innerhalb der vernakulären Architektur ist Rudofskys Hauptreferenz immer der Mittelmeerraum geblieben, da er wichtige Erfahrungen in den 1930-er Jahren bei seinen Studienreisen in Süditalien, Griechenland und Kleinasien gesammelt hatte.

Der spezifische Weg, die mediterrane Architektur von Rudofsky zu verstehen und zu interpretieren, ist das Thema dieser Arbeit, die darauf abzielt, den instrumentellen Gebrauch der Volkssprache im kreativen Architekturprozess hervorzuheben. Das Thema wird in der gesamten Arbeit des Architekten entwickelt, das heißt in seinen theoretischen Texten, architektonischen Entwurfsprojekten und Archivbildern, insbesondere seinen Reisefotografien und Aquarellen, die im Getty Center (Los Angeles) aufbewahrt werden.

Schlüsselworte: Bernhard Rudofsky, indigene Bauweise, Architektur im Mittelmeerraum

1. INTRODUCTION

The name of Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) is identified in many countries of the world with the exhibition and its related catalogue *Architecture without Architects*, the appealing photographic inventory of anonymous architecture, he organised at the MoMA, New York, in 1964 and which travelled for more than a decade all over the world. Besides this main exhibition, Rudofsky's writings and lectures were always centred on spreading the knowledge and the need of becoming acquainted with the so-called "non pedigree" architecture. It is on this that Rudofsky hinged his diversified work as exhibitions' curator, graphic designer, writer, critic, and above all architect.

With the vernacular Rudofsky intended to open himself to other cultures beyond the western world, to overcome the vision of an authorial architecture through the so-called minor architecture and finally to question the traditional typological categories, discovering architecture outside the limits of itself blurring the line between architecture and other disciplines. This new and transversal vision was achieved through the actual experimentation of places, it was observed in the real things, thanks to the many voyages that lead Rudofsky to many different countries.

Within the Vernacular, the Mediterranean area will remain Rudofsky main reference. Mediterraneanity was directly experienced by Rudofsky, thanks to the study travels to Greece and Asia Minor and thanks to the years spent in Southern Italy during the 1930s. It is from a Mediterranean site – the island of Thera (Santorini), Greece – that Rudofsky begun his investigation of vernacular architecture, developing a study on the spot of the traditional architecture and use of local materials, which became his doctoral dissertation. It is the life spent on the island of Capri, and then in Naples, at the island of Procida and at Positano – between 1932 and 1937 –, which left a strong sign, giving the opportunity to experience the Mediterranean lifestyle, and offering the occasion of key encounters with the Neapolitan architect Luigi Cosenza and the Milanese Giò Ponti, which opened important work opportunities. It is on Mediterranean sites, then, that Rudofsky begun his design career, through the design project of his own house in Procida, a house on the coast – the Villa Campanella – with Luigi Cosenza, the hotel S. Michele at Anacapri with Giò Ponti, the Villa Oro in Naples with Cosenza. They are all projects that reinterpret Mediterranean architecture defining topics, particularly for the domestic space, which will be exported by Rudofsky also in other contexts, that is in his design projects in South America and in the United States.

The interest in the Mediterranean was a central issue for modern architecture, bringing together architects from different countries, starting from Le Corbusier who had drawn with his *Journey to the East* the link between the ancient architecture of the Mediterranean and the quest for modernity. Rudofsky consciously carried out his interest in the Mediterranean architecture within this common thread of research. In the text *The Origin of the Dwelling*, published in the magazine *Domus* in 1938 he comments on the discovery of the architecture of the Mediterranean as a common issue of the architects of the post-war period: <In discussions of the architectural concept, a primary place was occupied by the primitive houses in certain regions of the Mediterranean... so that people talked of a

Mediterranean architecture as a precursor of modern architecture, or even of modern architecture as Mediterranean architecture> (Rudofsky, *Domus* 1938 b, p.18). Besides common aspects, though, there were different approaches and interpretations within the architectural modern environment. Rudofsky's specific way of observing Mediterranean vernacular and its influence and instrumental use within the architectural process is the subject of this paper, which is constructed following the thread of Rudofsky's work. It starts from the travels, it goes through his critical analysis work that sees in the *Architecture without Architects* exhibition and its catalog the most important moments and, as third step, it crosses through some design projects in which the observed topics became adopted architectural solutions.

2. VISUAL TRAVELOGUE: A SEARCH OF ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE

Rudofsky had founded his life on the practice of travelling. The voyage represented the most important part of his training since the 1925 study travel to Asia Minor and then in 1929 to Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece. After his study travels, on the footsteps of the Central European architects, following the tradition which connects Schinkel to Hoffman, Rudofsky travelled to the island of Capri, living there as well as in other locations in South Italy (Naples, Capri, Procida and Positano) during the 1930s. Successive itineraries will take him to many other countries around the world (the United States in 1941, Mexico in 1951-2, Japan in the second half of the 1950s and India in 1985) (Bocco Guarneri, 2003, pp.98-99).

The voyage became a regular and essential part of his life: <since the age of 17, when I entered architecture school on the university level, I made it a habit to travel every year from 3 to 4 months, mostly along the Mediterranean and into Asia Minor> (Rudofsky, n.d. II, p.6)

Travels were prepared by Rudofsky through reading of texts and note studies, but they became a direct sensorial experience. Visiting sites, Rudofsky looked not only at the built architecture but also at lifestyles; he became interested in domestic space, materials, stone floors, covered streets, bamboo, fabrics, carpets, graphics, dressing, washing and eating habits, street space, display cases, the reuse of materials, decorations, scents, cooking.

From the travels Rudofsky brought back a vast material made of notes, drawings, watercolours and above all photographs (see figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Part of the material is re-assembled for exhibitions, organized upon return from the travel. After the initial exhibitions held in Berlin and later in Vienna following the study trips, Rudofsky later organised a variety of other exhibitions in New York at the MoMa. The travel experience had for all of his life offered materials for critical work and reflections on architectural topics. From the travels, Rudofsky extrapolated specific interests which became themes and forms of argumentation, which were published in magazines and journals with beautiful images and generally concise texts.

Photographs and watercolours show the sites at different scales and through selective observations. This material built in time a large collection of images which is mainly kept at the Getty Center



Figure 1



Figure 2

(Los Angeles), a large archive of 5.500 colour and 125 b/w travel photographs, 33 travel notebooks, and more than 100 watercolours. This material is a vast, differentiated and fragmented whole that does not intend to investigate reasons that led to the architecture solutions, rather it constitutes a catalog of evocative solutions that may become of reference and generate other spatial ideas. Images thus acquire autonomy from the visited places and from the time that generated them. Differently to other vernacular studies, Rudofsky's interest is specifically formal and spatial, and as a consequence it becomes de-contextualized.

Experiences overlap, similarities emerge from distant places, as is the case for Japan and Italy, associated with the memory of the fisherman's voice and the colours of the vegetation: <Walking on an August day along the shores of the Inland Sea, on narrow paths flanked by crude stone walls, among fig-trees and medlars (which, by the way, are native to Japan), olive trees, white and pink oleanders, one easily falls victim to the illusion of being somewhere near Sorrento. The optical illusion is supplemented by an acoustical one. Through the milky haze that hides the calm sea drift the long drawn cries of fishermen sounding exactly like those of their colleagues in Mergellina> (Rudofsky, 1957, p.38, cited in English in Bocco Guarneri, 2003, p.219).

Travel experiences bring Rudofsky to build thematic and associative traces between places. Through the study of the material produced by Rudofsky, among the thousands of images, it is possible to identify threads of common observation that tie together the sites within architectural topics. Through his collection of images, Rudofsky reconstructs architecture not understood as belonging to a specific place, but as an expression beyond places and differences, that is as a universal condition of living.

Rudofsky's eye selects those universal themes that link architecture to its original state the relationship with the ground, the relationship between the parts, the act of creating boundaries. A large number of photographs of details of paving, stones, bases, steps, excavated spaces and quarries, from different parts of the world, highlight that architecture is primarily a topographical issue, a landscape adaptation and matter appropriation. Architecture is observed from the initial act of construction, that is from its foundation.

Hedges, walls, signs on the land, enclosures, courtyards are then a set of images that show variations of the fundamental act of architecture of defining boundaries, that of delimiting or cutting out a portion of the world to create space through appropriation. A large number images show settlements



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figure 1-5
Travel watercolours and photograph.

compositions. The focus is on the relationship between the unit – often just a simple solid – and the urban aggregation, generated through the repetition and variation of the single building. Villages and towns are observed as a communal architecture made of individual building in the play of solids and voids, light and shadow. Other images show an inventory of streets, arcades, covered and semi-covered passages, pergolas, terraces, roof-terraces; all spaces where what is highlighted is the space of transit, or the space in-between. The urban space, made of all these interstitial spaces, becomes a continuous space, without abstract divisions between public and private, interior or exterior spaces. Mediterranean Villages on the cliffs like the one of the Corricella at the island of Procida (Italy) or of the Greek islands show this complex and dynamic relationship among private and communal areas with passages, roof spaces, stairs, all set at various levels, from the ground floor to the roof level, generating a collective urban space which is continuous and rich.

Rudofsky's travel collection of images constitute an investigation on architectural and spatial topics, a study at a visual level.

3. ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ARCHITECTS: A SEARCH OF ARCHITECTURE THROUGH IMAGES

The same visual approach is found in the exhibition *Architecture without Architects* organized by Rudofsky in 1964 at the MoMA in New York as a circulating exhibition which travelled – in 2 identical versions – in 84 locations for 11 years (Rudofsky, 1977, p.368). It was organised after years of travels and interests for the spontaneous architecture.

The show is a gathering of images of vernacular architecture from all over the world, obtained through a search of the author among his friends, colleagues and a variety of archives, museums and libraries. The images were chosen without a selection criteria other than for being suggestive architecture images. As Rudofsky writes: <Many illustrations were obtained by chance, or sheer curiosity> (Rudofsky, 1964, "A note on the illustrations"). Rudofsky searched images which would be "imaginative" (Rudofsky, letter to Sert 1962, cited in Scott, 2007, p.176), "unique" (Rudofsky, letter to Munari 1962, cited in Scott, 2007, p.176), explaining: <We want to present the kind of architecture which will astonish both the modern architect and the museum visitor. I have great hopes that you may have among your photographs something truly spectacular> (Ibid.).

They were travel photographs, some by Rudofsky himself: <Methodical travel and long years of residence in countries that afforded a study of vernacular architecture have provided the mainstays of the exhibition> (Rudofsky, 1964, "A note on the illustrations"). This involved a heterogeneous material: some photographs were of a professional type, other amateurish, others came from geographic and anthropological archives, some from pioneering expeditions such as the flight of a German pilot in the 30s who captured the Chinese underground communities, and some were <rare documents as the photographs of villages in the Caucasus taken in 1929 by an American glaciologist> (Ibid.).

All of these images – in black and white – were printed in a variety of formats and assembled



Figure 6

directly, without frames, on a simple black-painted wooden structure to which they were mounted, some back to back, at different heights, vertically and even horizontally on the ceiling. The goal was <to avoid a gallery effect> and create <a 3-dimensional arrangement> (Rudofsky, lecture at Virginia University, p.5, cited in Bocco Guarneri, 2003, p.302). The result was a captivating visual experience where the visitor found himself immersed amongst the pictures, which were visible not only frontally but also diagonally, in groups and through the voids of the skeletal structure (see fig. 6). Small captions were put in separate panels, so all the focus was on the images.

It was not an orderly and commentary view of the exposed material, but a rich visual experience, deliberately fragmentary and stimulating, similar to that of the travels experienced by Rudofsky himself. The arrangement responded to a clear strategy: the aim of disconnecting the visitor from the known western world and, through the image captivity, the goal of detaching from an informative "objective" approach. The visitor would capture Architecture through the images themselves, thanks to their suggestive power, besides geographical and historical classifications, that is beyond space and time. Through this de-contextualization the visitor merges with the images of the world, among far away sites, distant from the actual geographic condition and from the contemporary time. In the lecture at the University of Virginia Rudofsky talks about the exhibition: <Geographically speaking, I am interested in the architecture of all continents and island worlds... In terms of time, I am concerned with man's building activities through the entire period of his existence. ...This exhibition, the first of this kind, approaches architecture not with a historian's mind but with a naturalist's sense of wonder> (Rudofsky, n.d. I, p.5).

That the main object of the exhibition was a visual involvement rather than a systematic study, is captured in the reviews by both critics and defenders. The comment on the NYT defined the exhibition as <an extremely sophisticated demonstration of architecture-as-abstract-art shown through building types and patterns that stack up magnificently as non-objective pictures in themselves, on a purely visual level, selected with an extraordinary knowing and gifted eye> (Huxtable, 1964, p.23).

Figure 6
Architecture without Architects exhibition photograph.

3.1. Architecture without Architects: the book

The text accompanying the exhibition, the catalogue which then became a book autonomous from the exhibition itself, republished in various languages and countries, is similarly organized through a clear image-based methodology.

The preface is the main text of the book. It introduces the topic, which is essentially the goal of showing architecture beyond the restrictions of the history of architecture as it is studied and taught in the Western world. Rudofsky here introduces an enlargement of the geographical limits, an extension of the investigation in time as well as a different approach which rather than based on masterpieces and connected to the individual designer, is the result of a common effort through times. Rudofsky quotes Pietro Belluschi to explain "communal architecture" as <a communal art, not produced by a few intellectuals or specialists but by spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage, acting under a community of experience> (Rudofsky, 1964, preface). Of this type of architecture, which can be called <vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural, as the case may be> (Ibid.), Rudofsky doesn't aspire to provide a scientific investigation, nor a concise history, rather this is introduced visually through the images.

The images are commented with brief writings that describe the content, furnishing insights to their interpretation. They are presented one after the other, without any attempt of ordering or cataloguing, such as through a chronological or geographical categorisation. Sites are always indicated, however there's no attempt to investigate the geographic source. Images are, though, gathered within topics, revealed by the titles of the short writings. Some regard compositional topics such as "Architecture by subtraction", "Town structure", "Unit architecture", "Enclosures", "Aquatic architecture", "Nomadic architecture". Others refer to typological categories such as amphitheatres, necropolis, dwellings, hill towns, fortifications. They both show that the enlargement of scope which Rudofsky referred to within the Preface goes beyond issues of time and location. The photographs in fact concern elements and solutions not generally included within the architecture vocabulary. A variety of spaces refer to the ancient and forgotten typology of the cave: houses, storages, dwellings, all carved out of the material of the rock or even of trees, demonstrate that architecture is not only a process of construction but also of subtraction, as in the case of the houses of Les Baux-en-Provence or of the church of Saint-Emilion (France). Minor elements – for scope and scale – such as those of the paragraphs "Arcades", "Covered streets", "Semicovered streets", "Loggie"

acquire here a greater recognition through images where they are shown in the foreground with the rhythmic play of light and shadow. A comment on photographs of streets in Spain and in Gubbio (Italy) highlights <the actual experience of traversing passages through complicated space that plays on all senses: sheafs of light piercing darkness; waves of coolness and warmth; the echo of one's own footsteps; the odour of sun-baked stones> (Rudofsky, 1964, "Covered streets" Figs. 79-80).

Buildings of functional type acquire here the importance of true aulic architecture, thanks to both forms and proportions as well as the material – the stone – with which they are <built for eternity> (Rudofsky, 1964, "Quasi-sacral architecture", Figs. 90-91). This is the case of the granaries of the Spanish province of Galicia or the ones in Lindoso in Portugal.

Elements from the engineering world – here the *engineering without the engineers* – also become architectural, as for the elevated platforms on piles on the water for the fishing (as the one in Vieste, Italy) or for other cases of tree houses and dwellings, all seen as the forerunners of the *architecture à pilotis*.

Some of the photographs' topics are introduced in the Preface, as the relationship with the ground and the strong response of architecture to the landscape, in particular in case of sites of difficult access, such as the village of Thera (Greece) on the high cliff overlooking the sea or the houses of Positano (in South Italy) or in Mojacar (Andalucia) and in many other hill towns. The response to the topography is explained by Rudofsky as a primary act of architecture; it is the definition of the settlement principle. The same primary and fundamental meaning is found in the case of defensive walls and boundaries. As Rudofsky explains in the preface, the urgency of defining borders is tightly connected to architecture and to urbanity, as it is showed by the term *urbs* which means walled town in Latin.

The paragraph "Enclosures" shows the powerful systems of enclosed outdoor spaces realised through walls, garden walls, hedges and fences which even more than the solids of the built architecture define urban settlements in the landscape (as in Cameroon, Africa).

Captivating photographs of Mediterranean cities comment on the topic of the relationship between building units and urban aggregation, that is on the potential urban complexity obtained through the repetition of the single unit (as the rectangular modules with barrel vaults of the island of Thera, Greece or the courtyard houses of Marrakesh, Morocco) due to irregular soil conditions or to small variations of the type.



Figure 7

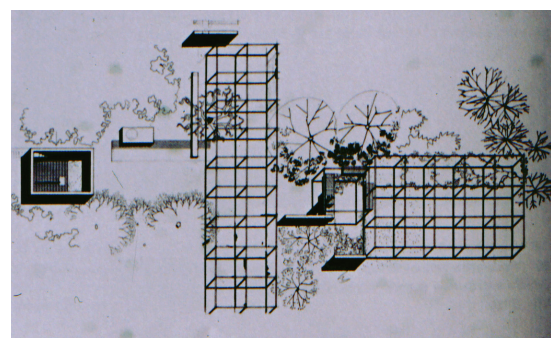


Figure 8

Figure 7
Architecture without Architects catalog book photograph.

Figure 8
House-Garden, Long Island (U.S.A.).

All the photographs which compose the book are therefore clearly selected through an architect's eye, which rather than looking for historical or geographical investigations essentially aims at a formal and spatial point of view. Rudofsky clearly states in a caption: <since history does not concern us here, we are free to admire the design> (Rudofsky, 1964, Figs. 9-10). The text underlines this architectural interpretation; architectural solutions are commented highlighting shapes, layouts, alignments, site response, geometric relationships, all qualities which the images reveal within the black and white contrast.

Further, in most of the photographs there is no solution of continuity between architecture and the landscape. Here the work of men is intertwined with the work of nature and as a consequence architecture rather than inserted in the landscape is part of it. Many photographs from various parts of the world enlarge the point of the view toward the great territorial dimension; images taken from above show terraces, systems of walls which divide the ground controlling the waters (as in the case of the vineyards in the Canary Islands) demonstrating that agriculture works architecturally define the territory reshaping the surface of the land. The well-known front cover of the first edition show the *Limonaie* – the structures for the protection of the lemon trees of the Lake of Garda (Italy) – shaping the hill through the terraces and the rhythmic repetition of the skeleton structure of masonry pillars and wooden beams (see fig. 7).

The text was not the only book dealing with vernacular architecture, designed for the architects, due to the shared and renewed interest for the topic within the architectural world during the post-war period. A relevant and similar work could be considered, for example, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (1957) investigating upon American vernacular architecture. This book was less provocative in comparison to *Architecture without Architects* and less catching both in the title and visually. The same Rudofsky later published another book on vernacular architecture – *The prodigious builders* (1977) – where the topic is further developed within the text and other images are presented. In comparison to this last book and to other studies on vernacular architecture, *Architecture without Architecture* stands out for the suggestive power of its images. It is thanks to the images that the book became a true best-seller of architecture, the <bible of architectural schools and faculties of design> (The Times, 1974, after MoMA 1974), as it was introduced in

England when it was published ten years after the NY exhibition.

The images, chosen by an architect's eye, become the discovery of architectural traces around the world within a collective and common production. The unfamiliarity and non-recognisability of places and periods of their realisation make the shown architecture abstract examples from where it is possible to extract new solutions, a collection of images of <untapped source of architectural inspiration> (Rudofsky, 1964, Preface), as the same Rudofsky reveals. This is how Giò Ponti commented on "Domus" in 1965: <Not criticism, not erudition, guided Rudofsky's choice of images, but a love of architecture, which will propagate in all of us that we conceive culture not as something that is "produced" but as something we receive, look, listen, and love. How many things we already love, discovered in these pages, or we recall having them newly found here> (Ponti, 1965, p.109).

4. MEDITERRANEAN SPACES: FROM THE IMAGES TO ARCHITECTURE

The architectural topics that Rudofsky explored within the observation of sites through his collection of images can be re-read in his design projects, that he realised mainly in the Mediterranean sites of Italy and Spain, and also in Brazil and the United States. A consistent line of research seems to link both the observed and the designed architecture. Rudofsky acquires what he experienced directly on sites; from the traditional houses of the Mediterranean he draws those spatial themes, which are at the essence of architecture to which he anchors his projects.

In the Villa Oro (see figs. 11, 12), designed in Naples (Italy) with Luigi Cosenza in 1936, the relationship with the ground and topography takes on a major role. Overlooking the bay of Naples and set on a cliff, the villa is a collection of volumes studied in the play of solids and voids, some cantilevered, others inserted inside the rock of tuff stone. Photographs showing Berta and Maria Teresa, the wives of Rudofsky and Cosenza, in visual conversation from different terraces of the villa communicate the spatial dialogue between the parts and the play of volumes and spaces one after the other.

The arrangement of spaces is apparently simple: the rooms are organized in succession, though the differentiated paths produce a spatial experience that, instead of forming a sequence, is a labyrinth-like fragmentation. Pathways, similar to those shown in the travel photographs, appear to be interstitial spaces and develop the topic of intertwining exterior and interior spaces, common and

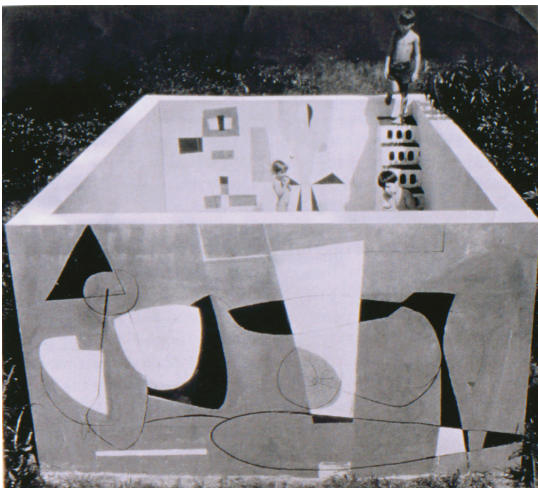


Figure 9



Figure 10

Figure 9 & 10
House-Garden, Long Island
(U.S.A.).

private areas, arranged at different levels. The relationship among spaces and with the ground reflect the arrangement of the Mediterranean villages, specifically the characters of Procida, the island where Rudofsky lived while working on the design project of the villa.

The topic of the enclosure, that is the definition of boundaries, which had been identified as a key one in the collection of images, can clearly be seen within the House-Garden design project in Long Island (U.S.A.), designed with the Italian artist Tino Nivola in 1949 (see figs. 8, 9, 10). Here walls and hedges of a variety of heights and variously composed, together with benches, tables, a fire place, a volume and wood frames create a sequence of outdoor rooms that cut out the existing garden by defining spaces and pathways. The enclosure-room is either just suggested or designed in its entirety, as in the case of the solarium. From the solarium, a totally enclosed space, it is possible to observe the clouds passing in the sky, while one can engage in nude sunbathing at any time of the year, thanks to the heat from the reflection of the sun's rays. Each room is distinct and meantime it opens to another room through a play of alignments, shiftings and openings. The whole layout is a sequence of outdoor rooms that can be crossed through a variety of ways.

The house in Procida (Italy, 1935), designed for himself and his wife Berta, is designed to live in order to restore contact with the ground and regain a lost sensory experience. You had to walk barefoot in order to know <the joy of feeling the soles of one's feet tickled by sand, by fresh-cut grass, by smooth marble> (Rudofsky, *Domus* 1938 a, p.6, cited in English in Bocco Guarneri, 2003, p.175). The bed is a room entirely occupied by mattresses. The bath is sunken into the floor. One eats lying on triclinia in the Pompeian manner. The radical nature of the lifestyle suggested by this design corresponds to the radical simplicity of the architecture. <What is needed is not a new way of building; what is needed is a new way of life> (Ibid.) was the title of the article with which Rudofsky presented this project, summarizing his alternative response to the much-debated theme of the house in the modern world.

The house is a simple courtyard volume at one level with a sequence of rooms. The enclosed space of the courtyard is a constant architectural topic, derived from antiquity – the Pompeian house – and the spontaneous architecture of the East and the Mediterranean. From the courtyard you can see the sky, a scenery which changes with the seasons and the hours of the day, and which physically transform the architectural space.

A direct relationship between spaces and ways of living was established in the design for a house along the coast of Positano (Italy), studied with Cosenza in 1937 (Villa Campanella) as the response to a request from Ponti for *Domus*. The house consists of two volumes of different heights, one of which is plastered and the other in calcareous stone – a <structural continuation of the rock> (Rudofsky, *Domus* 1937, p.17). Slabs set between the two volumes define the house as a series of open spaces around the roof garden with a magnolia and fig tree: the living room with the fireplace, a kitchen top, a semi-cylindrical unit for the shower. The house is meant for <spontaneous living> in close contact with the sea and the sun. Although it was only intended to be an ideal design, it was developed as though it were a real commission, published with details and calculations, together with a discussion with an imaginary client who fails to understand the radical nature of a house without rooms, closed-off spaces and entrances: <Where do you dine? Where do you receive guests? Where do you go in?> The architects reply that the house is like a medicine so that <you will be educated to live differently> (Cosenza and Moccia, 1987, p.113).

The above *excursus* through some of the main projects designed by Rudofsky, selected through a thematic criterium rather than chronologically,

show a constant and consistent idea of architectural space which sees its main reference in the Mediterranean vernacular. Spatial themes merge with the activities and lifestyle. Mediterranean Architecture becomes a way of living and inhabiting, and therefore of designing.

Rudofsky's modernity, through the teaching of the Mediterranean vernacular, is characterised by a set of spatial themes: a strong relationship with the ground as the primary choice and foundation act of the project, a spatial organization based on the separation among the parts, on the individuality of delimited space (the enclosure-room), on a sequence of external and internal spaces. Rather than through functions or as response to needs, space is defined in order to seek a life experience and a lifestyle.

Privileging the experiential over the functional, intimacy and solidity over visibility and transparency, separation of parts over the free plan, are Rudofsky's specific interpretation of Modernity.



Figure 11



Figure 12

5. CONCLUSIONS. THE ASSOCIATIVE VISUAL PROCESS

Rudofsky's specific way of interpreting Mediterranean vernacular is based on a visual approach, on the interest for the formal and therefore spatial solutions. In this it differs from other standpoints of a theoretical nature. We do not find in Rudofsky those arguments raised in relation to Mediterranean architecture by the architects of rationalism, particularly within the Italian environment, such as harmonic relations, geometry, the link with the classicism, nor theoretical functionalist statements. The comparison with the exhibition organized by Giuseppe Pagano and Guarnerio Daniel at the Milan Triennale in 1936 *Rural architecture in the Mediterranean basin* is significant. The exhibition, which may seem close to Rudofsky's research and to his exhibition *Architecture without Architects* for the topic and for being similarly organized through a collection of images, it actually shows a different approach. Pagano and Daniel images are ordered by type and aim at studying typological variations in the Italian areas. The accompanying text clarifies that the goal was the search for <the relationships between cause and effect> (Daniel and Pagano, 1936, p.12), and that <the analytic study has tried to find out for each thing and for each form its origin, its initial utilitarian cause> (Daniel and Pagano, 1936, p.27).

Rudofsky also moves away from other anthropological studies of his time, from those specifically focused on the vernacular, based on studying the architectural response to environmental, climatic and geographical conditions. This is clarified with the comparison with works such as Paul Oliver's *Shelter and Society*, (1969) which later developed into the encyclopaedia of vernacular architecture. The images collected by Rudofsky, rather than investigating the specificity of architecture with respect to sites, become an inventory of spatial solutions, a set of architectural topics from which new projects can be developed. The approach is anti-academic, a-systematic and not theoretical; the photographs acquire a role that is not merely documentary, and through the evocative and suggestive power of the image, they become generative of new ideas and projects.

The close relationship among the images collected in the travels, those of the *Architecture without Architects* exhibition and the architectural topics in the design projects, shows the consistency of Rudofsky's research and the essentially design-based and creative character of his investigation. The transition from the observation of existent architecture around the world to those of his design proposals is carried out through associative relationships and the construction of new narratives, as it happens in the creative design process. Rudofsky's work is developed at a visual and formal level; from the collection of images and thanks to the de-contextualization process, which allows him to distance himself from the visited sites, he can construct new topographic stories.

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