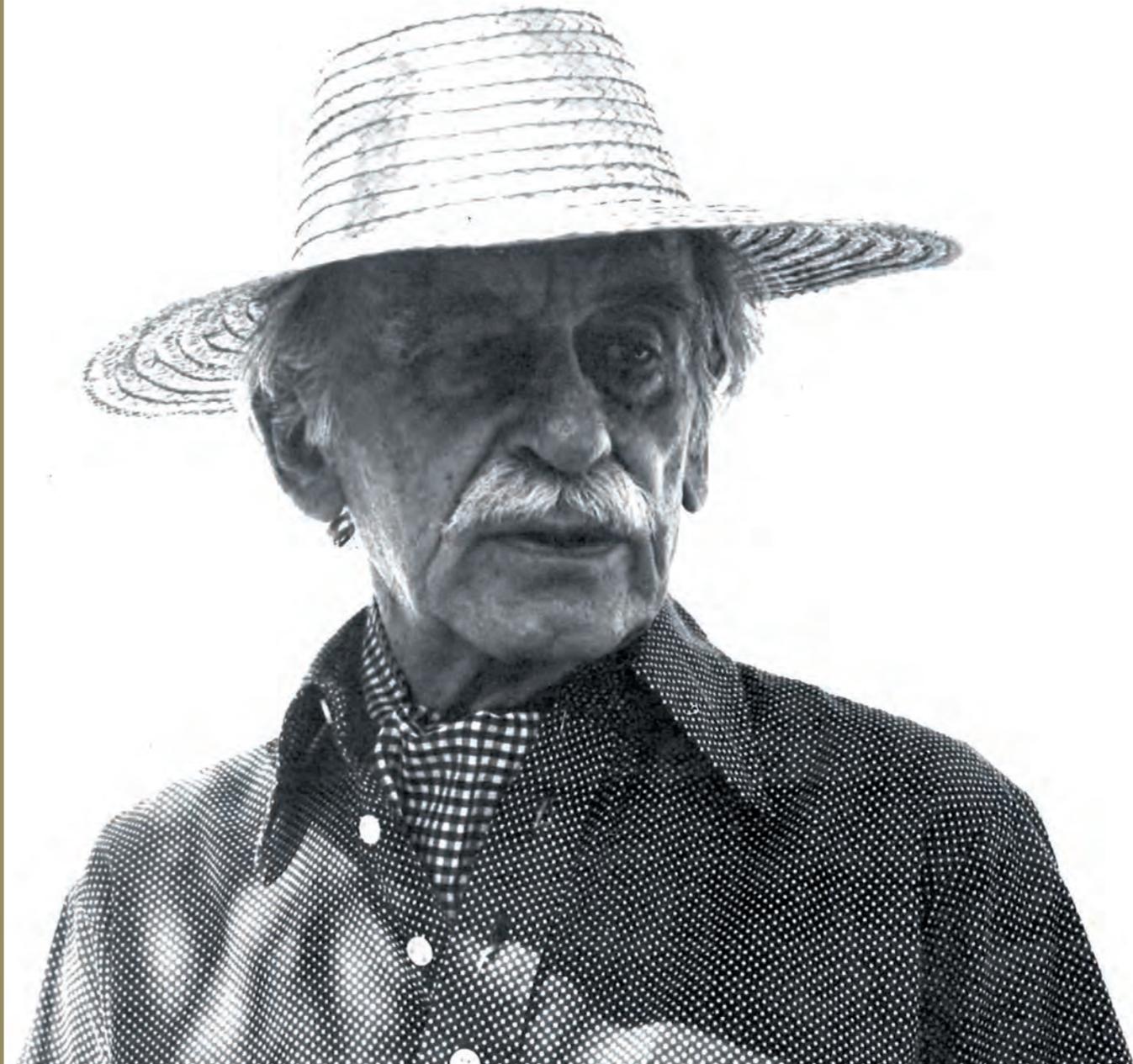


Ugo Rossi

Bernard Rudofsky

architect



Ugo Rossi

Bernard Rudofsky

architect



This study examines the designed and built architectures, the published works and the theoretical contribution of architect Bernard Rudofsky. Following a chronological order, his complex and multifaceted work is to be considered as one unique reflection on architecture and on the idea of living. Rudofsky is an interior decoration and fashion *designer*, an essays writer, a columnist and an exhibition curator. He ponders on subjects traditionally excluded from the discipline of architecture and he privileges themes which are to place him right at the margins the academic research world, both in terms of publishing and in terms of exhibition curatorship, addressing, preferably, audiences of laymen rather than those ones made of experts.

From a methodological point of view his works imply an examination of the condition and the significance of architecture and the role of the architect. He introduces a scenario much vaster than the traditionally recognised one, in which he brings together not so much different disciplines, but above all the idea of a complex architecture, able to merge varied, different areas normally considered not to belong to architecture itself, such as design, fashion, and domestic life style, which, to Rudofsky, in a relationship of reciprocal exchange, shape and are all shaped by architecture.

Ugo Rossi, was trained as an architect in Venice and Milan. After his master degree at the Polytechnic of Milan, he continued his studies in Venice, where he received his PhD at the Doctoral School of the Iuav University with a thesis on Bernard Rudofsky. His theoretical and project practice interests investigating the different meanings of the modern and the intersections between history and culture in the critical practice of modern and contemporary architecture.

He writes essays and articles in books, national and international journals. His latest publication, as editor, is the book *Tradizione e Modernità, l'influsso dell'architettura ordinaria nel moderno* (2015).

euro 30,00

ISBN: 978-88-8497-525-6



9 788884 975256 >



Ugo Rossi

Bernard Rudofsky

architect

Copyright © 2015 CLEAN
via Diodato Lioy 19, 80134 Napoli
tel. 0815524419
www.cleanedizioni.it
info@cleanedizioni.it

Tutti i diritti riservati
è vietata ogni riproduzione / All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced in
any form or by any means without
permission in writing from the publisher
ISBN 978-88-8497-525-6

Editing
Anna Maria Cafiero Cosenza

Graphic Design
Costanzo Marciano

Ringraziamenti

Questo lavoro nasce dalla ricerca svolta tra il 2009 e il 2012 presso la Scuola di Dottorato dello Iuav di Venezia in Composizione architettonica. La tesi costituisce il primo nucleo della mia ricerca su Bernard Rudofsky, e indaga i dispositivi e le tecniche compositive messe in atto nelle sue case costruite e progettate.

Gli esiti della ricerca di dottorato, nei successivi due anni, hanno subito una revisione che ne ha parzialmente modificato i contenuti, estendendo l’attenzione all’opera architettonica di Rudofsky, considerata nel suo complesso.

In questo periodo di studio ho avuto occasione di incontrare e coinvolgere nel progetto di ricerca numerosi studiosi, enti e istituzioni di ricerca. Non avrei potuto ottenere alcun risultato senza il loro aiuto e sono felice di poter manifestare la mia gratitudine. A partire dai professori del Collegio Docenti della Scuola di Dottorato dello Iuav di Venezia in Composizione architettonica e in particolare il professor Luciano Semerani, controtelatore, e la professoressa Eleonora Mantese, relatrice, che hanno discusso i contenuti della ricerca. Un ringraziamento particolare va a Giancarlo e Andrea Cosenza per avermi permesso di visitare più volte l’archivio di “famiglia” così da poter reperire il materiale necessario alla ricerca e a Gianni Cosenza, direttore della CLEAN edizioni, per aver accolto con interesse questo progetto editoriale. Ringrazio Carlo Cocozza di Montanara e Marilù Oro Cocozza, che mi hanno concesso con generosità di visitare più volte la loro casa permettendomi di sperimentarne gli spazi e l’articolazione. Monika Platzer e l’AzW, per la disponibilità, i suggerimenti e le indicazioni archivistiche. Juliane Mikoletzky per l’aiuto e la paziente assistenza presso l’archivio della Technische Universität di Vienna. Peter Noever, il MAK, in special modo Rainald Franz per la consulenza archivistica e Thomas Matyk per la cura del materiale fotografico. Sarah Sherman, il Getty Research Institute. Casie Kesterson, per l’aiuto presso il Getty. Lucia Miodini e il CSAC, Salvatore Licitra Ponti e il Ponti Archives. Ingrid Kummer e il Bernard Rudofsky Estate di Vienna. Lo studio Schwalm-Theiss & Bresich ZT GmbH Architects, per l’aiuto e la disponibilità. Joseph Rykwert, per avermi incontrato più volte e condiviso alcuni preziosi ricordi su Rudofsky, per la partecipazione e il contributo alla ricerca, per l’incoraggiamento. Andrea Bocco Guameri per il prezioso aiuto, i consigli e la disponibilità. Alberto Ferlenga, Mario Lupano, Michelangelo Sabatino, che mi hanno aiutato criticamente a sviluppare e integrare, sotto diversi punti di vista, temi che nella tesi di dottorato erano stati appena accennati o non contemplati. L’architetto e amico Carlo Zavan che mi ha gentilmente prestato l’introvabile versione italiana di Architettura senza architetti; la Biblioteca della Fondazione Querini Stampalia, la Fondazione Cini, la Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Milano, la Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Storia, di Progettazione Architettonica, e la Biblioteca Centrale dello Iuav; un ringraziamento particolare a Paola Chiara Barsotti e Giancarlo Bisazza, senza i quali non avrei potuto accedere a molti materiali bibliografici indispensabili per questo studio. Ringrazio infine Ethel Lotto per il sostegno incondizionato e il paziente lavoro di lettura, rilettura, correzione e integrazione delle bozze.

A tutti coloro che mi hanno sostenuto, incoraggiato e aiutato durante questi anni di ricerca ma che non sono stati citati vanno, oltre ai miei più sentiti ringraziamenti, le mie doverose scuse.

Cover photo

Bernard Rudofsky, Spain 1980
(photo: Lucy Fellowes, courtesy Cooper-Hewitt Museum N.Y).

Contets

- 6 **Foreword. Bernard Rudofsky: A Polyhedric Architect** Michelangelo Sabatino

- 8 **Opinions on Bernard Rudofsky**

Prelude

- 12 **Bernard Rudofsky, the architect. An introduction**

Act one: Europa

- 26 **Vienna. A Multilanguage Education**
- 56 **Italy. The Mediterranean Experience**

Intermezzo: Latin America

- 124 **Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paolo (1939-1941)**

Act two: USA

- 146 **Civilization and Mechanization**
- 176 **Much More Than Books can Convey**
- 212 **Back Home**
- 250 **Before the Architects**

Final

- 274 **A Different Architecture for a Different Way of Life**

Summary

- 292 **Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988)**
- 294 **Chronology - Works and Projects**
- 301 **Bibliography**
- 316 **Illustration's Sources and Credits**



Foreword. Bernard Rudofsky: a Polyhedric Architect

Michelangelo Sabatino

Illinois Institute of Technology, College of Architecture, Chicago

Although the multifaceted qualities of Austrian architect and critic Bernard Rudofsky have been studied in recent years, much still remains to be revealed about his polyhedric contributions and his nomadic life. Which Rudofsky emerges from this book written by Ugo Rossi, a young Italian architect and researcher? In this book Rossi focuses on Rudofsky as an architect who builds a complex and rich idea of dwelling in the modern world thanks to a cosmopolitan outlook that transcends the limits of narrowly-defined national identities. His *wanderlust*, an obsession for travelling that stimulates his imagination, leads him to discover the different cultures of Europe, Asia and the Americas.

From designing sandals and houses to curating exhibitions, Rudofsky engages with different scales of inquiry to affirm an anthropocentric, often paradoxical vision, of modernity in polemic with a simplistic machine-age aesthetic. Despite deploying tools that emerged from modernity such as the camera and the airplane in order to facilitate his research of different countries and cities, Rudofsky never forgets the ancient roots of everyday (vernacular) living. It is not a coincidence that he developed a deep-seated passion for “Architectures Without Architects”, buildings realized mainly by skilled workers who are deeply rooted in to the local environment and use pre-industrial materials. To be sure, Italy, a country in which Rudofsky lived and worked in the 1930’s collaborating with the likes of Luigi Cosenza and Gio Ponti, possesses a rich heritage of architecture without architects.

By analyzing archival drawings, period photographs and publications, correspondence, sketchbooks, Ugo Rossi strategically focuses upon a number of significant episodes in the career of Rudofsky providing a fresh reading of his contributions in Austria, Italy, Brazil and the United States. Rossi throws new light on Rudofsky’s pedagogical and educational contribution to the culture of modern living, especially during his time in America, when he witnessed a society in rapid transformation. By pointing to multifaceted contributions in photography, writing, exhibitions, and the design of objects and architecture, Rossi demonstrates that Rudofsky regarded all these practices as expressions of the complex act of making and thinking about architecture. Rudofsky’s contribution can thus provide cues for contemporary architects as they seek to adapt and make sense of the contemporary challenges to a practice that has become increasingly nomadic.

**Bernard Rudofsky, Luigi Cosenza,
Casa Oro in Posillipo, Napoli, 1934-37**
fig. 1. View of the roof from the bed room of
Augusto Oro
(Archivio Cosenza)

They had written on Bernard Rudofsky

The Mediterranean thought Rudofsky, Rudofsky thought me

Gio Ponti, *Aria d’Italia*, VIII, 1954

A number of articles written for Domus, reveal that Rudofsky was not at all happy with the dogmas of functionalism, very fashionable in his time, and with the surly faces on his Cartesian colleagues: he laid down the problem of architecture in non-academic terms. He was all alone in the search for solutions somewhat more poetical, moving away from any kind of intellectual superstructure and regarding a man’s dwelling in the same way as the Chinese philosophers, the Indians Holy men or simply our Italic country folks were used to do.

Leonardo Sinisgalli, *Furor Mathematicus*, 1967

In his researches, fruits of his work during the long stays in many Eastern countries, he addressed aspects regarding the local customs rather than the more strictly architectonic ones, giving a precise character to this same exhibition, which he devised and for which he was in charge of the curatorship [...] “Architecture without Architects “ is a visual criticism to the more educated Architecture, to our way of living, to our society; firmly underlying the peace of mind of many underdeveloped civilizations, a peace of mind that reaches far beyond certain aesthetic, economical and technical values.

Mario Brunati, *Casabella*, n. 297, September 1965

More than an exhibition [Architecture Without Architect], is a protest – a pointed, bitter, desperate broadside from a cultivated, rebellious heart and mind against the sacrifice of the well-built landscape to the urgencies of the industrial, nuclear age [...] This show is the sermon of a prophet in today’s architectural wilderness. It may reach the broad audience it deserves.

Ada Louise Huxtable *The New York Times*, 15 November 1964

A book of transcendent importance to architectural history was published during the decade: Bernard Rudofsky, “Architecture Without Architect”.

John Maas, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 1969

Regarded simply as an ultimate album of holiday snaps, this collection [Architecture Without Architect] is a constant pleasure and stimulus, a gracious garland of tributes to the little ingenuities and passing felicities that have been institutionalized in the rituals of pre-professional building design [...] But he [Rudofsky] must know as well as the rest of us that under our present technological and social dispensation, primitive buildings have only the most marginal and superficial things to teach us, and that an excursion like this into architectural noble-savagery is just serendipity à la mode. Reyner Banham, *New Society*, 2 September, 1965

[...] the master iconoclast of the modern movement [...] Mr. Rudofsky has spent a lifetime analyzing and challenging all of the conventional and received wisdom about the arts of living and design. In this wrap up approach to the basic functions of eating, sleeping, sitting, cleansing and bathing, he is as delightfully provocative and contentious as ever.

Ada Louise Huxtable, *The New York Times*. 11 January 1981.

Although always at the margins of architectural culture, Rudofsky has played an influential role, especially for the ones that, having moved away from the official architectural practices, have searched architecture itself for humanity’s tangible sings rather than the mechanic ones, for the circumstance of chance rather than the building blueprints, for the “natural” rather than the “repetitive”[...] Far from discouraging architects from interfering with the environment, Rudofsky asks for the broadening of the spectrum of interests, both human and technical, of those same architects. That one is the aspect that we mostly admire in his work.

Casabella, n. 547, June 1988

Bernard Rudofsky, the provocative architect and social commentator whose books and museum exhibitions influenced not only his profession but fashion, interior design, urban planning and food. Maura Reynolds, *Times*, 13 March 1988

Born in Austria in 1905, Rudofsky was well known in Italy because of the time he spent there in the 1930’s, particularly in Naples where he co-worked with Luigi Cosenza. He moved away to Brazil, where he built a few distinctive villas. As he moved to New York, he devoted himself to devising provocative exhibitions on the way people dressed, ate, ‘used’ their body. Amongst the ingenious catalogues of those exhibitions let us remember “Architecture without Architects” and “Streets for People”, both translated in Italian.

L’Architettura Cronache e Storia, n. 392, June 1988

With a captivating and preacher like style, rich in anecdotes and parables, he digs deep down into general habits to bring to the surface what normally goes unnoticed. [...] Pursues his objectives with the cultural arrogance and the means that his position allow him to use: books, articles, college lessons, exhibitions worldwide, architectures [...] Architecture is just one of the elements at play in the vast revolution of life, but the architect is a privileged observer a social apostle [...] his numerous texts , [...] convey observations on every aspect of life: architecture (Architecture Without Architects, 1964; Streets for People, 1968; The Prodigious Builders, 1977), the home (Behind the Picture Window, 1955; Sparta/Sybaris , 1988), proxemics and postural habits and the Orient (The Kimono Mind, 1965; Now I Lay Me Down To Eat, 1980), clothing (Are Clothes Modern?, 1947; The Unfashionable Human Body, 1973). Paola Antonelli, *Domus*. N. 697, September 1988

The idea of the Mediterranean, based on the ‘patio’ (the open air room) and on “the wall’ (‘A wall’ is the bread of architecture) was to Rudofsky the example for a happy architecture ‘without architect’. (In this Gio Ponti and Rudofsky resembled each other). And Rudofsky fate was to teach Americans just that. Lisa Licitra Ponti, *Juliet*, n. 36, April-May 1988

At this time the architect Rudofsky, whose view of life was not connected with building but with life, was no longer concerned with architecture, with building. [...] Life or the origins of life was the motivation behind all of his thoughts and activities [...] he himself had worked unremittingly and without compromises on the exhibit, designing, rejecting and amending. His manner of work was always spontaneous, he resisted energetically the normal planning methods of architects. He fought against everyone, when he had to, remained unbending. Peter Noever, *Umriss*, Nr. 16-17, 1988.

I had the impression he was frustrated in his efforts, waiting endlessly for the necessary others to give his ideas their due, and unable to work at the pace he was capable of. Unfortunately, he never got the proper credit or acknowledgement for the long series of wonderful things that he accomplished. Seymour Rosen, *Space*, # 9, Winter/Spring 1989

Remember Bernard

Joseph Rykwert

These testimonials are the contribute to Bernard Rudofsky by Joseph Rykwert, which I met on several occasions in Venice, for discuss my doctoral thesis, and Ingrid Kummer, as owner of the personal archive of Bernard Rudofsky

and person close to Berta Rudofsky, who kindly have sent me in the winter of 2011, following my required to write a “portrait”, on the thought, on the work, on the personality of Bernard Rudofsky. Not wanting to submit applications prepackaged I asked them a portrait, a memory of their personal experience and relationship with Rudofsky. Therefore, these two writings are the living memories of two protagonists who have experienced and lived - differently one from the other – important episodes of life with Bernard and Bertha Rudofsky.

Where did I first meet Bernard Rudofsky? I no longer remember. It might have been in the Domus offices in Milan, with Lisa Ponti. Or in New York, perhaps through the very sociable Leo Lionni, painter and graphic artist. At any rate, I was already an admirer. It must have been in the mid- 'fifties; I did not know anything about his pre-war work as an architect, in Vienna, in Milan with Gio Ponti, in Naples with Luigi Cosenza, or his Brazilian adventures. What had captivated me was his Are Clothes Modern? and his unexpected shift from object to process, to the way of life. It was a wholly new way of understanding the business of designing.

Of course it went back to his Moravian/Viennese origins; maybe my interest in that part of his background drew us together, and a trivial perception: the sense of coffee consumption as a cultural activity. I remember his telling me that there were 60 variants on coffee orders in Viennese cafés; and that waiters in the café frequented by students of the mathematics faculty were not allowed to wipe off the figures or calculations which clients had written on the marble-table-tops. Certainly, when I first arrived in New York in 1955, I had a recommendation to his friend Saul Steinberg, who played such an important part in his New York life. But Steinberg remained sociable and affable while Rudofsky’s later years were clouded by what he perceived as his lack of public success and the withdrawal of public attention. And yet he seemed to continue in demand. The exhibition at MoMA (and the subsequent book), Architecture without Architects, a decade after we first met had great resonance. The lesson that the quality of an environment is not so much dependent on individual buildings but on how they hang together certainly needed to be drummed in - and his brilliant photographs did so very successfully. But I, for one, was a sceptic. And I wanted to think out what it was I found unsatisfactory about his approach [On Adam’s House in Paradise] . I resolved that it was the emphasis which Rudofsky put on spontaneity - if not of the individual building, certainly of their grouping. Now it seemed to me that there was nothing spontaneous about the act of building, that it always required deliberation and reasoning. You could never just put one stone on another and hope for the best; not even one building next to another.

When his publisher and patron, MoMA also issued my book [On Adam’s House in Paradise], I sent him a copy at once. Did he not see the connection? I never enquired; but since we continued friends, I assume that the contradiction did not strike him. Again, we came into implicit contention when - and again through MoMA - I became part of a research team looking into the nature of the street. We had been commissioned because of Rudofsky’s response to the same commission, which did in fact appear in 1969 as a book, Streets for the People, but was judged unsatisfactory, too anecdotal, too episodic, by his and our patrons, the Housing and Urban Development Administration. Our research, done through the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. only did marginally better than his and the whole enterprise seems to have withered, though we also produced a book out of it, Streets as Elements of Urban Structure, which appeared in 1977.

However, our friendship continued. Perhaps because rather than recalling these occasions of disagreement, he remembered me as the enthusiastic reviewer of The Kimono Mind and of the Unfashionable Human Body; at any rate, I recollect a dinner at my house, perhaps in the mid-seventies. Another guest was James Stirling. We were standing looking from our living room into the bedroom which had been decorated in a sub-rococo plaster relief; I had the walls painted grey, the reliefs picked out in white. Stirling was a bit censorious. He would have painted it all one colour.

- Are you a painter then?

asked Rudofsky, sympathizing with me.

Some years later we had dinner with him and Berta in their New York apartment. I recollect the occasion as rather muted. The apartment was all black and white. Black and chrome furniture, and on the walls a series of black and white drawings by Saul Steinberg – who [Rudofsky] had always been such a dainty colourist! The monochrome effect emphasized a certain melancholy in the occasion. It was difficult to reconcile this rueful evening with any image one might have of him: the sunny, witty,

chic Rudofsky - the architect, fashion and graphic designer, writer of successful books who should have been basking in the evening light of his very productive career.

eople who did have to do with the last exhibition, Sparta-Sybaris of 1987 (which should have been his triumphant return to ‘his’ Vienna) noted that it was marred by bitterness and ill-humour. He died the year after. Were those closing years withered by ill-health?

Something had obviously gone wrong in his life. I know nothing about it. They were an almost archetypal childless couple, he and Berta - but there had been a son who died in infancy. In his many teaching assignments, he never seemed to have formed a ‘school’ - there was never word of pupils, followers: his world was that of his contemporaries and that, inevitably, was shrinking. Looking back through his enormous and varied achievement it is difficult to reconcile it with the sad memories with which he left me.

These testimonials are the contribute to Bernard Rudofsky by Joseph Rykwert, which I met on several occasions in Venice, for discuss my doctoral thesis, and Ingrid Kummer, as owner of the personal archive of Bernard Rudofsky

and person close to Berta Rudofsky, who kindly have sent me in the winter of 2011, following my required to write a “portrait”, on the thought, on the work, on the personality of Bernard Rudofsky. Not wanting to submit applications prepackaged I asked them a portrait, a memory of their personal experience and relationship with Rudofsky. Therefore, these two writings are the living memories of two protagonists who have experienced and lived - differently one from the other – important episodes of life with Bernard and Bertha Rudofsky.

It’s a pity that the archive in my possession is not opened. When I went through the papers, a few lines caught my attention. Other things came up at conversations with his wife Berta Rudofsky when I accompanied her in summer to the Rudofsky house in Frigiliana. That Bernard Rudofsky loved the civilized world of Europe, especially the time of Goethe. In several books he tries to explain the refined way of living in Europe to the Americans. The everyday life. How the way of everyday living of people shape their houses. Or the art of travel. The refinement of language for example. With Berta Rudofsky I learned that the German language as spoken in Vienna in 1920 was quite different to today Austrian language. Much lighter, more elegant, more precise in expression.

Bernard Rudofsky studied at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna and they had then a all full of different building materials, called “Bauhof” . He said how important it is that the students of architecture could touch, feel the materials and out of this experience make their choice. He said also to his students, how important it is, actually to go to real locations and not only to look at two dimensional pictures.

He loved islands. His Ph.D dissertation is about Santorin. Then he went on to live in Capri. He adored Japan when he was around 26 and only decades later had the possibility to live there. The Mediterranean and Japan thrilled him.

He was concerned with the poetic everyday life and how to enjoy it and how to refine it.

In his house in Andalucia I experienced everyday life of the Rudofskys. It was in a way archaic and ensured a degree of simplicity, where you could begin to “think“ through the absence of telefone, television etc. A lot of space, beautiful proportions of the generous rooms, which were designed for a loving couple, as Berta Rudofsky told me. The garden with his 30 white pillars.

His playful attitude as you see it in his sketches for houses for the Mediterranean shores and sketches for the summer house, he planned for himself at Amagansett in Long Island.

In his writings and sketches he describes his concept of luxury in a joyful lifestyle (Sparta/Sybaris).

Dear Ugo, I can only sketch out some thoughts for you. I hope you find them useful.

Some thoughts

Ingrid Kummer

The Bernard Rudofsky Estate, Vienna



Bernard Rudofsky, the architect. An introduction

13

This study examines the designed and built architectures, the published works and the theoretical contribution of the architect Bernard Rudofsky. Following a chronological order, his complex and multifaceted work is to be considered as a unified, unique reflection on architecture and on the idea of living. Rudofsky is an interior decoration and fashion designer, an essay writer, a columnist and an exhibition curator. He ponders on subjects traditionally excluded from the discipline of architecture and he privileges themes which are to place him at the margins of the academic research world, both in terms of publishing and in terms of exhibition curatorship, addressing, preferably, audiences of laymen rather than ones made up of experts. From a methodological point of view his works imply an examination of the condition and the significance of architecture and the role of the architect. He introduces a scenario much vaster than the traditionally recognised one, in which he brings together not so much different disciplines, but, above all, the idea of a complex architecture, able to merge diffuse areas normally considered not to belong to architecture itself, such as design, fashion, and domestic lifestyle, which, to Rudofsky, in a relationship of reciprocal exchange, shape and are shaped by architecture.

Although the materials on which the research is based are taken from primary sources: letters, recollections, lectures, photographs and drawings, the iconographic system and the works taken into examination mainly derive from the huge heritage of secondary sources such as journals, books and periodical publications. A choice was made to bring back to light what was for so long neglected and which, even if not easily accessible, was readily available in many libraries' storage areas.

Despite the ambition of most researchers to discover original materials, possibly overlooked by previous researches, such pressure, when investigating Rudofsky's intellectual and creative activity, can be completely satisfied just by using secondary source materials, given the fact that Rudofsky's entire corpus of work can be considered mostly new. His published work has been far too long out of print, many of his numerous articles are difficult to obtain, but most of all, and an additional cause of his pseudo-anonymity, his works are not included in the atlases or the many handbooks of the history of the architecture of the 20th century. His name is completely missing. The most reliable explanation of this situation is to be found in Monika Platzer's statement:

Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) was neither an architect nor a theorist in the usual sense. His architectural output was generally considered too limited to be featured in any compendium encompassing the history of twentieth-century architecture, and his books were not considered scholarly enough for the academic establishment¹.

ig.2. Bernard e Berta (photo: Nina Leen - The Getty).



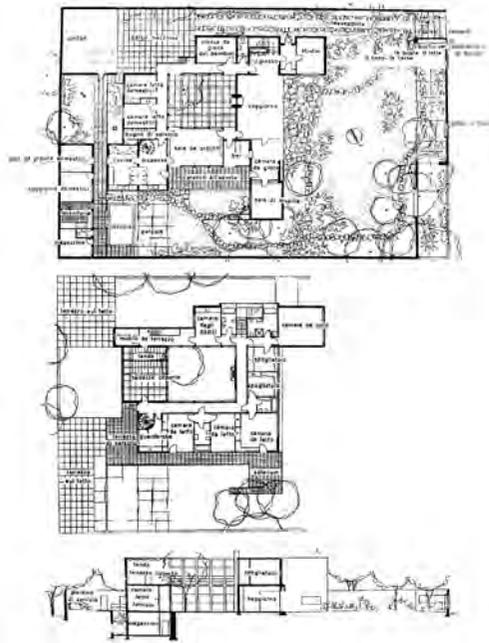
We cannot feel indifferent when we realise that Bernard Rudofsky is ignored by the histories of architecture even though he was engaged in architectural works considered amongst the most notable when it comes to Modernity, such as Casa Oro in Italy [fig. 1] and the Frontini's and Arnstein ones in Brazil [figs. 3, 4]. There are no traces of his curatorial activity at the most important museum of modern art and architecture in the world: MoMA in New York, at which he organised many provocative exhibitions aimed at prompting visitors, as well as historians and architects, to ponder on the condition of modern day architecture and contemporary ways of living, and above all where he staged the subversive *Architecture Without Architects*².

It is difficult not to think about a precise reason for keeping his work out of the historical and cultural scene. Perhaps because his significance is not recognised, or because the complexity of his research is completely ignored; certainly his voice is not as interesting because it raises questions which do not belong to the idea of institutionalised architecture, or, even more, because he is interested in topics which are not recognised as belonging to the idea of architecture itself. In looking for reasons for this historical void, Heinrich Wölfflin's quote, which introduces this work, may suggest an explanation.

These premises should not prevent us from acknowledging the research activity of the scholars who, especially after Rudofsky's death in 1988, approached his work and have contributed to the reassessment of his role both in terms of operational and historical production. At the top of this list is Andrea Bocco Guameri. In 1993 he started to devote his work to Rudofsky and in 2003 he published the only text entirely dedicated to his work: *Bernard Rudofsky A Human Designer*³. It was followed by a number of articles and a PhD thesis by Felicity Scott⁴ which, together with Guameri's work, represent the most documented studies and researches on the Austrian architect.

The monograph written by Guameri⁵, the catalogue published for the symposium organised by *Architekturzentrum Wien (AzW)* on the occasion of the centenary of Rudofsky's birth in 2005, *Lessons from Bernard Rudofsky: Life as a Voyage*⁶, the travelling exhibition and related catalogue on *Villa Oro*⁷, the international seminar, exhibition and catalogue *Bernard Rudofsky: Desobediencia Crítica a la Modernidad, Arquitectura sin Arquitectos, 50 años después*⁸, together with many other studies and publications, demonstrate how, in recent times, a strong interest for Bernard Rudofsky has resurfaced and has been reinforced by the blossoming of numerous academic works⁹ and PhD theses¹⁰. Such attention has grown so much that writing a complete bibliography has become an almost impossible task. Numerous publications addressing topics such as the environment and the tourist industry, and many forms of architecture (primitive, traditional, local, Mediterranean, vernacular), simply quote or demonstrate a certain degree of interest in Bernard Rudofsky and his works, such as *Architecture Without Architects*, and *Streets for People*.

Making sense of the complexity of his teaching, the importance of his influential thought and how it can impact in operational terms, identifying his heritage in the work of others, still deserves a close examination. On the other hand, Rudofsky himself did not bother to have pupils and even though he taught at many universities and colleges, he always did it on one condition: to *un-teach*¹¹.



beside page

**Bernard Rudofsky,
Casa Arnstein, San Paolo, 1939-41**

fig. 3. Preliminary Project, Ground Floor
(New Pencil Points).

**Bernard Rudofsky,
Casa Frontini, San Paolo, 1939-41**

fig. 4. Section and plan of ground floor
(New Pencil Points).

This is the context in which this study has to be placed, the research of a full understanding of Rudofsky's teaching, in its entirety, like a sort of legacy from which to learn a lesson.

His work tells a tale of a unique professional, and controversial life, story. In it, it is possible to identify the contradictions of modernity within which he operates, because, it is with regard to modernity that he manifests his complexity and multiplicity. Bernard Rudofsky suggests ways to avoid simplification and standardisation, he turns his mind towards the multiplicity in which the world of architecture is involved, towards the relationship of reciprocal participation between architecture and daily, domestic living.

Rudofsky¹² is educated in Vienna during the 1920s, a time in which the European cultural debate concentrates on the contrast between the Academy and Modernity. Architects such as Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos are seeking, in forsaking style in favour of modernity, to find freedom from the stylistic system which characterises the works of most academic architects. It is a battle that is not only fought by opposing the most traditional of tools, decorative styles of façade, but also by voicing their perplexities with regard to the validity of the supremacy openly declared by the modern movement, the mechanistic idea of the *Existenzminimum*, and the sketchy 'matrix' spare time-work-dwelling, which was gradually developing in the works of the CIAM's (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne) all over Europe.

Rudofsky's criticisms are directed at the modern, understood as the development of building technologies and confidence in perpetual progress. His open scepticism towards the protocol for a dogmatic modernism would be unaccountable without referring to the clash that took place, in the West, from the early decades of the 20th century until the 1960s, between the concept of innovation and that of conservatism in architecture.

The expectation that every new discovery or refinement of existing means must contain the promise of higher values or greater happiness is an extremely naïve thought [...] It is not in the least paradoxical to say that a culture may founder on real and tangible progress¹³.

In this dispute Rudofsky's position is unequivocal and clearly expresses the terms of the controversy. His radicalism is such as to demand that each matter should be rationally re-evaluated from the beginning, trying to avoid any legacy tied to the academic tradition. Like other contemporary architects, he asserts the possibility of confronting the principles and dogmas of modern mechanisation, maintaining that they can also be read within the building tradition of ancient civilisations and popular cultures. The modern can exceed both the limitations and the potentials put forward by technology, allowing for a certain freedom that comes from a rational approach to the enquiry into 'the way of living' divested of any doctrinal conditioning.

Even after leaving Austria, Rudofsky does not leave behind the influence of the Viennese cultural context, inspired by Gottfried Semper, Camillo Sitte, Alois Riegl, Adolf Loos and by those that, like Josef Frank, reject a modern international style sprung from machines. In an endless search for physical wellbeing, pleasure and *art de vivre*, and investigating the

relationship between the body and architecture and between discipline and excess, he feeds on the principles of the *Lebensreform*, focused on reforming society, life and clothing, from which he develops his guidelines for a way of life balanced between austerity and luxury. We should not forget the lessons he learned by the Mediterranean and during his stay in Italy, where he measures himself up against the teachings of the so-called ancient, primitive, rural anonymous, and to which he retraces references to the discovery of tradition within modernity.

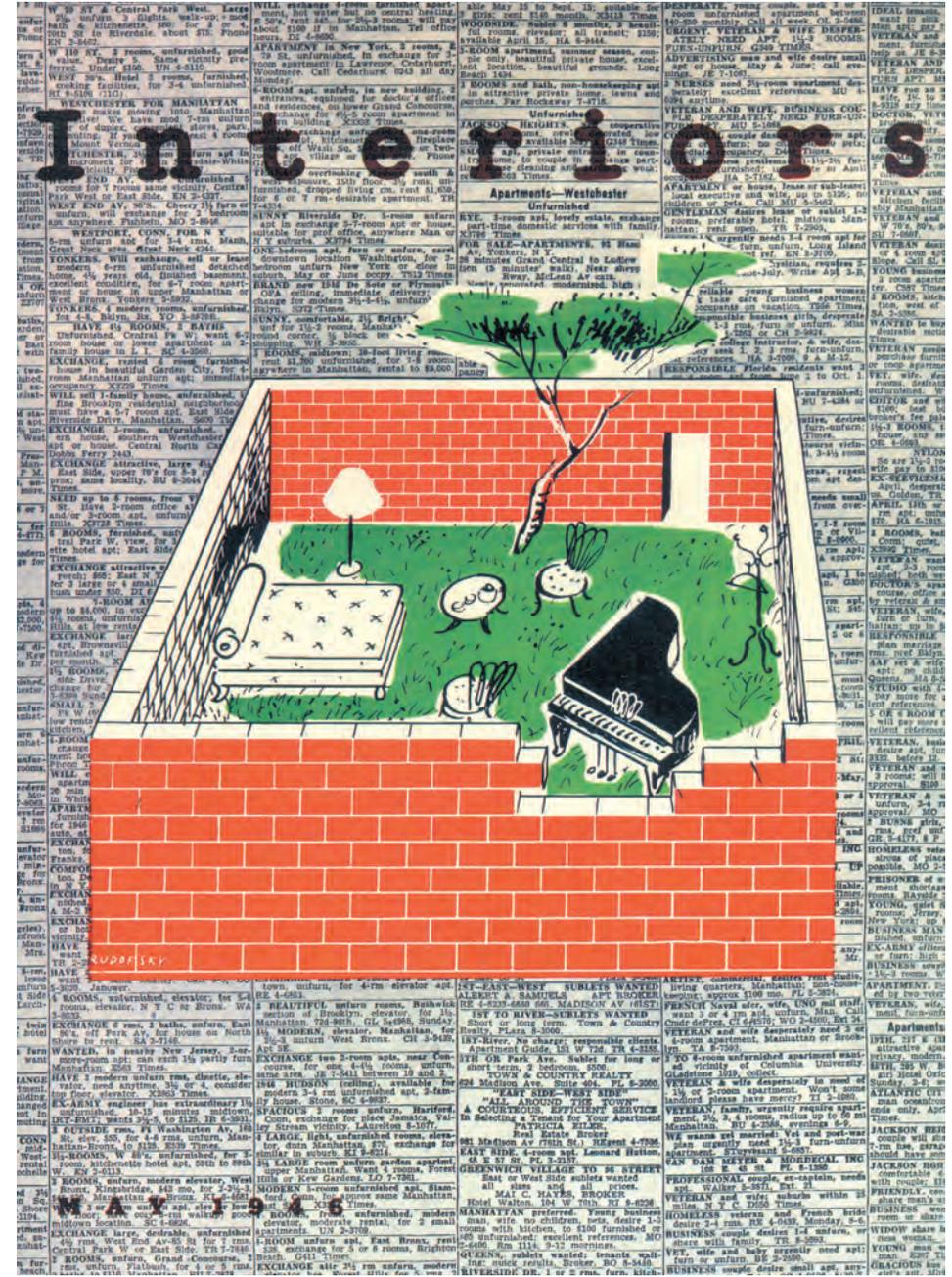
Rudofsky's work is entirely dedicated to the idea of Living, his houses are devised so that people can 'live' within them while remaining nonetheless rigorously neutral to them. His ideal references are the Pompeian or Islamic houses with a yard: only in the *hortus conclusus* is it possible to benefit from the closeness of the natural elements, the sun, the air, water, and still remain in a private place [fig. 5]. In traditional Japanese architecture Rudofsky identifies the house as the vase of the inner feelings, of the independence from judgment, because "*The oriental house at its best [...] is all house, all shelter, a true sanctuary for the man*"¹⁴, the place where the wholeness of being is achieved. An intimate home, designed with the summer in mind:

The traditional Japanese house [...] is a warm weather affair that barely manages to permit the inhabitant to struggle through the winter. Essentially, it is a platform, raised a few feet above ground, plus a roof. (The rows of wooden platforms put up near shrines, on look-out points, on beaches or wherever people get together, are the simplest type of this architecture.) The eaves - some are as wide as eight feet - permit the house to be kept completely open during the rainy season. When summer comes, the Japanese literally throws open his house to the winds and the sun. He removes the outer walls of the house and stores them away for the duration of the warm weather¹⁵.

Rudofsky, as well as Josef Frank who argues that a house "*does not exist for cooking, eating, working, and sleeping, but rather for dwelling. Somewhere between the concepts of cooking, eating, sleeping, working, and the concept of dwelling lies that which we call architecture*"¹⁶, believes that dealing with ordinary issue is of fundamental importance, because it is no use building a house without having clearly in mind what the necessities of mankind are, because it is useless dealing with the architecture of living without knowing what the diverse, and often better, opportunities are for sitting, eating, washing and sleeping: "Of all these functions we have rather vague ideas"¹⁷. The wellbeing of the dweller should be the main concern for the planner. Rudofsky is of the opinion that professionals have chosen personal profit and the interests of real estate and business speculators, ignoring the interests of the dwellers, the community and the environment:

We have never attempted to make the house into an instrument for living, rather than just a machine for living. The difference between the two is roughly the difference between playing the violin and playing a jukebox¹⁸.

fig. 5 Bernard Rudofsky, Interiors, CV, #10, 13 May 1946, Cover.



Bernard Rudofsky devotes a number of exhibitions and books to the art of living; this is the common denominator of his work, the topic to which he consigns his energy and on which he seeks to ground an interaction with an audience as vast as possible. He demonstrates that behaviour and comfort often get into a relentless dispute, giving way to paradoxical situations which interfere with the pleasantness of everyday life. He shares his cultural battle for the art of living with museums and universities, promoting the establishment of faculties and departments dedicated to it, but his suggestion is received with coldness. The founding hypotheses for his proposals are rarely understood:

When I proposed my exhibition *Are Clothes Modern?* at New York's Museum of Modern Art, its director [Alfred H. Barr, Jr.] confessed that he was completely oblivious of the clothes he wore. He saw no connection between art and everyday life; no relationship between intellectual pursuits and the conduct of one's life. The curator of design at the same museum [Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.], who dignified pots and pans by showing them in his memorable *Good Design* exhibition, assured me that he could not care less what he was eating. To his mind a kitchen pot was an *objet d'art*; its use for preparing food was purely incidental¹⁹.

Bernard Rudofsky believes that the shaping of clothes and the shaping of a house should be undistinguishable and criticises the difficulty of accepting the body and its nudity, without moralising, and without the hypocrisy of shame. It seems as though there is no culture able to escape the dissatisfaction with the human body. Rudofsky exposes "*man's unwillingness to accept the anatomic form of the human body, as satisfactory and definite*"²⁰. A general tendency exists to modify the body, to assign to it an identity through symbols of affiliation to a group, which, at the end, will take the body to a further stage of its own 'alteration'.

The manifestation of deformity most systematically and unconsciously perpetrated by Western people is the one regarding the foot, resulting from the use of footwear not really conceived and devised for the human anatomy. Rudofsky demonstrates the incompatibility between the clothes that we wear and our body:

Why then, do we hesitate to say that the function of clothing, besides covering our shame and reducing the cold air or intensifying the heat, is also to be disagreeable? Why do we pay our doctors for keeping us alive when we do not exercise enough ingenuity to make life more pleasant? Why do we spoil the pleasure of eating by putting on the most absurd body coverings such as formal dress? Why do we install expensive gadgets like air cooling in our houses when relief can be had by taking off our coats and neckties? Why do we talk at all about efficiency in pleasant living when we cannot or do not want to come to terms with the problem of clothes which affect living constantly? ²¹.

The desire to create an artificial environment is to him just a symptom of our hostile relationship with nature, it is the mandatory social custom of wearing garments inappropriate to perspiration which forces people, even in reasonably temperate climates,

to install air conditioning devices, wasteful of energy resources and interfering with the relationship with the natural environment. Different ways to design clothes would allow different postures and the surrender of chairs. Greater attention to the characteristics and the materials of the floor would create a different relationship with the other spaces in the home. A different culture of the body could significantly change the need to 'sustain' certain parts of the body with chair-backs, boots, collars, cuffs and corsets. On many occasions Rudofsky expresses his opinion on the condition of the architect and architecture. The whole of his work is an ongoing theoretical consideration, which deals with the cultural outcomes achieved by architecture. At the same time he points at the need to ponder on what is generally neglected by many. In one of his conferences held in Seattle he remembers:

over the years I collected a wealth of documents on little known architecture - what I call non-pedigreed architecture - that seemed to me to express an intuition on the part of the builders which is not found among modern architects²².

The MoMA's exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* reflects on the observation that some of the best contemporary architectures - and past ones as well - are accomplished by so called "*ignorant*" builders, without any knowledge or training in theoretical architecture²³. Furthermore, Rudofsky states that "*Architecture is far too serious a matter to be left to the architects.*"²⁴. More than once he declares that, despite being a graduated and qualified architect, he stopped 'practicing' in the 1940s, becoming a sort of conscientious objector, a position that he assumes not because of architecture itself but because of the operational practices of professional architects.

The face of a country, of a city or town, is not the result of a design programme; it is the reflection of a way of life. Every society has the architecture it deserves. If we are sometimes less than happy about ours, it is because technology and wealth alone do not necessarily produce the best results. *Architecture Without Architects* drives home this point by comparing, if only by implication, the serenity of architecture in the so-called underdeveloped countries with the progressive chaos and blight of our urbs and suburbs²⁵.

This point of view irritates Reyner Banham²⁶, *Progressive Architecture*²⁷ and Josef Rykwert²⁸, as they dread a dangerous shift of the profession towards an unprofessional, dilettante trend. But Rudofsky does not indicate these structures as useful models to reproduce, he rather maintains that, far from being accidental, architecture 'without pedigree' bears evidence of the possibility of more humane and intelligent ways of living. The so-called vernacular buildings are often examples of authentic functionalism and Modernity. In other words, according to Bernard Rudofsky, the 'ignorant' builders do not subordinate the search for well-being to progress and profit, conscious that a development that disregards human necessities is sterile and counterproductive. Rudofsky is of the opinion that modern architecture is illogical, does not comply with nature, with human

habits and to human life, but it is rather more influenced by fashion and other short-lived trends.

Let me remind you that in the 1920s, when plate-glass was put on the market as a building material within everybody's reach, new buildings all of a sudden appeared in negligée, so to speak. Glass was the new stretch fabric of the time. The greatest sensation was then Mendelsohn's Schoken department store. It was the first see-through building. A transparent department store was the thing, architects told the public and each other. It was functional. 50 years later, department stores look like medieval fortresses. Their walls are solid, except for the entrances and show windows on the street floor. Above them, there isn't a square inch of glass. Although the interior organisation of department stores hasn't changed a bit in half a century, the exterior has²⁹.

For a lecture in Copenhagen, Rudofsky decides symbolically to title his contribution "*Back to kindergarten*", "*because, if we ever decide to get out of the mess that so-called modern architecture is in, we have to start all over again, to begin at the beginning*"³⁰.

Without a knowledge and understanding of the past any speculation on the future tends to be quite amateurish; the study of the past is the work of the architectural historian, that normally is thought not to be interested in the common man's dwellings but rather concentrates his attention on the monuments built by famous architects and commissioned by kings and Popes. Hence comes Rudofsky's need, since the time when he was a student, to go every year, for three or four months at a time, to the countries of southern Europe and Asia Minor, in order to study and learn what he could have never found in books. They were not trips organised by the school or by a travel agent, but rather solitary wanderings.

In the early 1920s, [Rudofsky said] tourism, the idiot's delight, had not been invented yet [...] ³¹. Today, when you travel around the world, and wake up in the morning and look out of your hotel room window, you may find it impossible to guess where you are (of course, you have your diary with you, and there is printed paper with the hotel's letterhead in your desk drawer) ³².

What does Rudofsky envy in vernacular architecture? The fact that it is not standardised: "*One is not likely to confuse an Andalusian town with a Swiss town, or take a Japanese village for a Mexican one. The very big towns [...] are, after all, stereotypes*"³³. What is perceived as a provocation is not just the nature of Rudofsky's studies, but rather the ease and nonchalance with which he deals with and conveys them. His exhibitions are not just "*Exhibition with a point of view*", with something to say, like Ada Louise Huxtable³⁴ and James Carmel³⁵ have noticed, Rudofsky wants to put the visitor of his shows and the reader of his books in the condition to draw autonomously one's own personal conclusions without doing so because induced by a planned reaction. Such exhibitions are supposed

by a very personal technique and theoretical base, which will drive Rudofsky to organize exceptional, out of the ordinary, staging and shows³⁶. It is precisely in looking at his curatorship activity that one can really appreciate Rudofsky's talent as a communicator, his ability to introduce an active conversation with the public. Addressing an audience of non specialists, he tries to release the issues at hand from the scholarly aspects diverting them onto a more educational path. His main interest is a popularizing one, intended to stimulate the large audience without the 'control' of the *mainstream* critical apparatus. In works like *Architecture Without Architects*, *The Missing Link*, *The Prodigious Builders*, Rudofsky does not seem to worry about the lack of historical references, he does not show any attention to a scientific approach. His exhibition work provides the stimulus to investigate an issue which may appear to the public almost unexplored, or, on the contrary, taken for granted and far too known. This is done by illustrating unusual aspects and in presenting the topic in an unfashionable way, like the textile handicrafts at the MoMA's show, *Textile USA*, in 1957 [fig. 171], or provocatively, as at the *Cultural Exhibition* at the *Brussels World Fair* in 1958 [fig. 6]. The approach operated by Rudofsky is one that has the ability to bring traditionally neglected themes to the attention of large audiences to whom he presents, for the first time, the opportunity to engage with them in an exciting way. Rudofsky describes the disorientation that comes about when trying to interpret the significance of the house. Quoting Henry James, he affirms that it is necessary to concentrate on the tasks that a house allows rather than on the fixtures, devices, appliances. He wants to demonstrate that life can be less boring than what we are used to:

Townsend [...] He hasn't found a suitable house in a hundred years and he probably never will, for he does not even know what to look for in a house except improvements which, like a will-o'-the-wisp, are forever receding³⁷.

Rudofsky believes that, within the realm of the arts, the pleasure of the senses should come before the intellectual one³⁸. When he elaborates on the topic regarding the house/home he does not refer just to the building process, to the solidity of it all, but also to the ways of life that are shaped within and by it and by the shaping that the house receives in return. Quoting Lawrence: "*We have lost the art of living; and in the most important science of all, the science of daily life, the science of behaviour, we are complete ignoramuses*", expressing also "*As of today, we are still very far from knowing what is good for us*"³⁹. His last exhibition in 1987, *Sparta/Sybaris. Keine neue Bauweise, eine neue Lebensweise tut not*, puts forward once again, 50 years on, what he had asserted on the pages of *Domus* in 1938 "*What We Need Is Not a New Technology but a New Way of Living*". Perhaps even today, a critical reading of his work, allows us to assert how little has been achieved in terms of research on the art of living. Any effort in the direction that he suggested is still firmly anchored and superficially dealt with. In reading today the 1938 *Domus* articles, what we find striking about them, is not just their being so topical even today, but, above all, Rudofsky's prophetic quality. It is remarkable that the criticisms that they express have always been excluded from the professional



practice and that society's suffocating inertia does not leave much room for reactions. Rudofsky's manifested fears are today's certainties, the standardisation that scared him is nowadays globalised. The same clothes, packaged who knows where, are sold all over the world through a mass trading system, in architectonic structures aimed at huge crowds of people, all eating the same food and sharing the same globalised styles of life, identical everywhere. It is not new building practices that we should be concerned with, Rudofsky urged, but his lesson went unheard. A more favourable reception was given to the exhortation to a way of building based on less destructive rules, paying special attention to contemporary new materials. But Rudofsky was not referring to a sustainability achieved through technical development, he rather thought of devices that are able to avoid any waste of energy. Building without destroying should have been a natural consequence of a way of life: a home set deep inside nature, without appliances, without any mechanical refrigerating and heating system, because built to meet those requirements through the tools of mankind and nature, a wall, a tree, a fireplace. Like a piece of clothing good for

all seasons, all circumstances, for the human body. A Spartan life because of its ethical behaviour as well as a sybaritic one in its search for pleasures, a life of intellectual and physical satisfactions, a full life, without useless objects, without damaging impositions. A life limited in terms of material possessions, endless in terms of possibilities.

The significance of Bernard Rudofsky appears, paradoxically, more incisive, because never fully realised. Herein lies the need to consider the thought and to draw from the reflections of this architect. The research area is still vast, there is still a lot to do to build a new way of living. This study examines the central themes of Rudofsky's research, and tries to provide a key to interpret the elements of his design. The various areas are considered in a chronological sequence in order to contextualise them within the cultural debate of the time, with the objective to explain the author's position within the context of modern architecture, the extent of his work, the influence and the critical and operational following that all this had. We also reflect on the themes of his research and on those which will be generally defined as Rudofsky's 'numerous interests', according to a comprehensive conception, relating them all to the main common topic: living, the subject around which Rudofsky's activity gravitates, and that supports the many facets of its expression.

The examination of Rudofsky's works, or better the whole of his work, in a chronological order, throws some light on how his work is characterised by an amazing balance both in terms of theoretical contents and in terms of planning and compositional elements. It is not rare that 'parts' of his designs are put forward again just as they were without any change, so much so to consider them a constant, or even that some of his articles or chapters of an essay are included in a different book or as the subject of an exhibition. His consideration of architecture and living seems to be fixed on certain principles that remain unaltered. Despite the themes remaining constant, the situations in which Rudofsky tries to assert them are always different, his research and theoretical reflection frequently find a different answer and show their ability to change according to the occasion.

The book is articulated in three parts, the first one on the years in Europe, in which is examined his education and his apprenticeship years until his stay in Italy, during which Rudofsky defines his compositional vocabulary and organises the central core of his theoretical conception. The second one, "Intermezzo", deals with his stay in Latin America, where Rudofsky has the chance to actively design and take part in the ferments animating Brazilian culture at the time, and where he builds two houses considered the two best examples of modern architecture of our time⁴⁰. The third section investigates his activity in the United States, where Rudofsky resides for the most part of his life and where he deals with the difficult, almost paradoxical, relationship between European culture, which Rudofsky fed on, and the culture of the US.

Every chapter is provided with an introductory section, in which the facts are chronologically described, which are followed by critically in-depth sections on the specific topic and works.

1. Monica Platzer, "Introduction", in *Lessons from Bernard Rudofsky, Life as a Voyage*, Birkhäuser, Basel-Wien 2007, p. 12.
2. See the paragraph "Not everything is possible at all times. Architecture Without Architects, 1941-1964".
3. Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A humane designer*, Springer, Wien - New York 2003.
4. Felicity Dale Elliston Scott, *Functionalism's Discontent: Bernard Rudofsky's Other Architecture*, Princeton University Ph.D., 2001. On the research and interest for Rudofsky by Felicity Scott see here in Bibliography, "Writings on Bernard Rudofsky".
5. Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A humane designer*, *Op. cit.*
6. Monika Platzer (edited by) *Lessons from Bernard Rudofsky, Op. cit.*
7. Exhibition held at the Palazzo Reale in Naples, from 21 February to 13 March 2009, subsequently held in Rome at the Department for Architectural Studies's Gallery "Ludovico Quaroni" from 19 to 27 June 2009. The related catalogue, *Villa Oro*, Westkreuz - Druckerei Ahrens KG, Berlin - Bonn 2008, edited by Inken Baller, Evelyn Hendreich, Gisela Schmidt-Krayer, illustrates the results of a research made by some scholars from the Department of Architectural Studies at the *Brandenburgische Technische Universität* (BTU) in Cottbus, with the contribution of brief essays by Werner Oechslin, and of the exhibition's curators. The show exhibits some of the original material sources, with the Cosenza's Archive's permission, and tells the story the planning phases of this extraordinary architecture, right from the early sketches to the elaborations of the final model. The catalogue has the advantage of providing, thanks to Inken Baller's contribution, details on the relationship between the two planning designers, in the essay *Luigi Cosenza und Bernard Rudofsky – Reflektionen zu einer Freundschaft* (Luigi Cosenza and Bernard Rudofsky – reflections on a friendship).
8. The convention discusses the reach and the influence of the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* and of Rudofsky himself on the modern and current historical and critical context.
9. See Bibliography, "Writings on Bernard Rudofsky".
10. See Bibliography, "Studies and Researches".
11. Bernard Rudofsky, hand written text for the lesson *Back to kindergarten* to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Copenhagen, 8th April, 1975. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Copenhagen* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty) p. 1.
12. Bernard Rudofsky was born Zauchtl (Suchdol nad Odrou), the current Czech Republic, in 1905. Son of Bernhard Rudofsky and Elisabeth Primus, he moves with his family in Vienna in 1906, where the father, a veterinarian doctor, is in charge of the supervising council that oversees the city's markets.
13. Johan Huizinga, *In de schaduw van morgen*, H. T. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, Harlem 1935, pp. 41-42; *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*, W. W. Norton & Company Inc, New York 1936, p. 55; Quoted in Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects*, MoMA, New York 1964, n. p.
14. Bernard Rudofsky, unpublished lesson, quoted in: Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A human designer*, Springer, Wien New York, 2003, note 16, p. 44.
15. Bernard Rudofsky, "Introducing Japan [III]", *Domus*, n. 330, May 1957, p. 38. See also Bernard Rudofsky, "A House for the Summer", *The Kimono Mind*, Garden City, Doubleday, N.Y. 1965, pp. 112-131.
16. Josef Frank, *Architektur als Symbol. Elemente deutschen neuen Bauens*, Verlag Anton Schroll & Co., Wien, 1931; English translation by John Frank Sands Jr.; *Architecture As Symbol*, PhD of the University of Pennsylvania, 2011, p. 149.
17. Bernard Rudofsky, "Sparta-Sybaris", *Interior Design*, LIX, # 6, April 1988, p. 254.
18. Bernard Rudofsky, *The Human side of architecture*, lecture in Seattle at the conference *Total Architecture*. 1966, published in: Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A human designer*, *Op. cit.*, p. 242.
19. Bernard Rudofsky, unpublished lecture, 1980. See also Bernard Rudofsky, "Fist Things Fist". Document introduced at the *Man Problem Solver* regarding the development dynamics of man as problem solver and an enquiry on the process of problems and solutions, International Design Conference in Aspen, Aspen, June 18-24 1961 (The Bernard Rudofsky Estate, Vienna), published in Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A humane designer*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 226-230.
20. Bernard Rudofsky, "Subtitle not used for per The Unfashionable Human body", Anchor Press, NY 1971, quoted in: Andrea Bocco Guameri, *Bernard Rudofsky, A human designer*, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
21. Bernard Rudofsky, *Are Clothes Modern? An essay on contemporary apparel*, P. Theobald, Chicago 1947, p. 174.
22. Bernard Rudofsky, "The Human side of architecture", *Op. cit.*, p. 240.
23. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Copenhagen, #2 e #4* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty).
24. Bernard Rudofsky, *Back to kindergarten, Lectures Copenhagen*, April 8 1975 (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 1.
25. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Virginia* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 4.
26. Reyner Banham, "Nobly Savage Non-Architects", *New Society*, # 24, 2 September 1965, p. 24.
27. "MoMA Continues Attack on Architects", *Progressive Architecture*, XLV, # 12, December 1964, pp. 45-47; Jan C. Rowan, "Editorial", *Progressive Architecture*, XLV, # 12, December 1964, p. 121.
28. Joseph Rykwert, "Adam at Forty", *Journal of Architectural Education*, n. 65, pp. 7-8.
29. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lecture in Provincetown* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 3.
30. Bernard Rudofsky, *Back to kindergarten, Op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.
31. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Copenhagen, Lecture #1*, February 17 (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 3.
32. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lecture in Provincetown* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 3.
33. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lecture in Provincetown, Ibid.*
34. Ada Louise Huxtable, "Shows with a Personal Vision", *The New York Times*. 11 January 1981.
35. James H. Camel, *Exhibition Techniques, Travelling and Temporary*, Reinhold Publ. Corp., New York 1962, p. 22.
36. See the chapter "Much More Than Books Can Convey", in which is analysed Rudofsky's art of exhibiting.
37. Henry James, *Washington Square*, Harper Brother, New York City 1880. Quoted in Bernard Rudofsky, *Behind the Picture Window*, Oxford University Press, New York 1955, p. 6.
38. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Bennington* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 4.
39. Bernard Rudofsky, *Lectures Copenhagen, Lecture #4*, 7th March 1975 (Rudofsky Papers, Getty), p. 1.
40. As claimed by: Gio Ponti, "Casa a Posillipo", *Domus*, n. 120, dicembre 1937, p. 6; Lisa Ponti, "Le più desiderabili ville del mondo", *Domus*, n. 234, marzo 1949, pp. 1-9; Sacheverell Sitwell, "The Brazilian Style", *The Architectural Review*, March 1944, pp. 65-77; "House at São Paulo, Brazil", *The Architectural Review*, June 1944, pp. 157-162, "House at São Paulo", *The Architectural Review*, November 1944, pp. 135-138; Philip Lippincott Goodwin, *Brazil Builds. Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1943, pp. 99-100. Vienna. Una educazione poliglotta

Act one: Europa



Vienna. A Multilanguage Education

27

Born into a German speaking family, originally from the Polish region of Galicia, Bernard Rudofsky is a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a multicultural, multi-lingual empire; as he declares himself:

"My native country,[...] was a pastiche of a dozen nations, each with its separate language and the native architecture was just as diversified. Thus I had the chance to learn at first hand that there is not just one way of living that leads to happiness" ¹.

Vienna itself, in the 19th century, had developed, contrary to the nationalistic trends of other countries, a pluralist and polyglot culture, and, within the spirit of historicism, an architecture of historical continuity², a reformation movement associated to the architectural and constructional evolution of the city itself³.

In accordance with the spirit of the city, Rudofsky is proud of the relative freedom and of the opportunities of daily interaction with diversity, regarded not so much as a disorientating condition, but rather as an advantage in comparison to the people who lived in limited and homogeneous contexts. At the turn of the century Vienna had the structure and the cultural complexity necessary to express that same pluralism in its schools of architecture, whose influence was fundamental.

At the progressive Wagner Schule, with its rational and positivistic architectonic doctrine and its unconditional adherence to technical and aesthetic progress, comes to life a whole generation of students with a strong aesthetic and romantic sensitivity. Otto Wagner's pupils, the ones pushed by the Viennese wind of emancipation, are the main representatives of a rational-romantic regionalism and constitute the core of an architectonic school, both traditional and bourgeois, which brings to final completion the stylistic pluralism of the 18th century.

From the more 'conservative' schools like the Technische Hochschule come, on the other hand, scholars and intellectuals such as Josef Frank, Oskar Wlach or Oskar Strnad, who reflect, beyond the grounded opposition to Adolf Loos, the technical plan of the architectural scenario of the time. Particularly important for the understanding of Rudofsky's thought is the role played by his Viennese education, perhaps the only fixed point in his nomadic life. The influence of some Viennese lessons at the Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte, by architects like Loos, Frank, Strnad, Wlach and Sobotka at the Technische Hochschule (where he achieves his qualification as an architect) will mark the point of origin and consequent development of his architectonic thought. These lessons, which put together the fundamentals on which the theoretical apparatus of

beside page

**Sigfried Theiss & Hans Jaksch,
Edificio in Herrengasse, Vienna, 1930**

fig. 7. View from the Herrengasse
(Architettura).



**Exposition Internationale des Arts
Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes,
Paris, 1925**

fig. 8. Haus & Garten, Austrian Pavilion
(Moderne Bauformen).

his entire work is based, will be constantly quoted and used as an example. Rudofsky criticises the modern mechanistic culture and tries to correct the uncertainties, proposing alternative cultural models and making hypotheses on different ways of life. His restless attitude toward architectural styles and fashion, considered in terms of an ongoing mutation, is very similar to the one of Loos and Frank and all the others who refused a single, one-off culture and Western civilisation, of which Frank provides a clear image:

One of the great experiences of the war was the discovery of the machine. Despite all the admiration for these tools in the manufacture of mass-produced commodities, their true power had never been understood until then; it had never been clear that the purpose of our entire scientific enterprise was, first and foremost, to devise weapons of war that are the foundation of our European power, civilisation, and culture⁴.

To Loos, modern, western mankind is unable to live with tradition because completely 'uprooted'. In the essay *Architektur*⁵ published in *Das Andere* in 1909, he describes the impossibility for the modern architect, whether or not a good one, to build on a lake, because, inevitably he would spoil it. The peasant does not do it, nor does the engineer, only the architect does, precisely because he does not feel any more the bond to a 'culture' or to a 'tradition', but rather to 'style' alone. To Rudofsky the modern is experimenting with new forms of freedom thanks to technology, but also a rational approach to problems, without any doctrinal conditioning, and giving up pure formal innovation. As Loos asserts: "*Modifications of the traditional way of building are allowed only if they constitute an improvement*"⁶. The choice of pure forms is coherent with the decision not to carry on with compositional originality. The construction has to inhabit the space without being a visual distraction or a spiritual constraint for the dwellers. Like Loos and Frank, Rudofsky hardly tolerates the architect who imposes his own formal choices on the inhabitants. He looks with respect at the traditional Japanese house because "*Nothing too much is in it. A protest against ostentation [the Japanese house] is opposed to everything that is garish, and loud*"⁷. Both Frank and Loos debate the contradictions of Western society and look with admiration at, on one side, British domestic culture, "*which we owe the modern form of the house*"⁸, and on the other at the stability of Japanese forms. Forms defined by a long lasting cultural selection, whose stability is the result of a sort of acquired perfection. Both of them, like William Morris, associate the job of the architect to the one of the craftsman, a job learnt tiresomely and through experience, a trade with a tradition, contrary to what Frank states: "*The world is covered with placards, and we become numb unless a new layer of them is added every week. This is the tragedy of modern architecture*"⁹.

Frank gets his education at the Technische Hochschule and in partnership with his school friends Oskar Strnad, Oskar Wlach and Walter Sobotka opens an interior design shop called *Haus und Garten & Co.*¹⁰, a tribute to *House and Garden* by Baillie Scott. Opened in the summer of 1925¹¹, the shop supplies a small selection of furniture, but also lamps, cushions and printed fabrics designed by the architects themselves. Most

of the products are available to order and can be customised. The design principles of *Haus & Garten*, are very telling in order to understand the design choices with regard to Rudofsky's own works. Both the accent on the sensory aspect and the idea of the house and its furnishing in relation to the way of living expressed by that group of architects will always be evident in Rudofsky's work.

Strnad is a significant author when it comes to reducing architecture to its most essential elements and to the exploration of the psychological effects of architecture on humankind. In the essay *Gedanken beim Entwurfeines Grundrisses*, (Emerging thoughts when drawing a plan), he states:

[architecture is not] a world merely visible, it is made, on the other hand, of an infinite number of 'imponderables' [...] Thanks to the concentration of energy from the actual representation, both in terms of possibilities of motion and in terms of the effects of light, smells, noises and tactile feelings: not only the surface of the substance has to be involved, but also its soul¹².

In an article published in *Innen-Dekoration* in 1922¹³ and after in *Domus* in 1936, Strnad indicates the principles of the design of the interior decoration of the house,

[they] are not in direct relationship, in architectonic terms, with the environment. If they are, all becomes rigid, and we feel embarrassed for our freedom of movement, which is actually the first thing that we demand of an environment. Mobile means 'that can move'. Therefore light and not fixed. The environment should not assume a chaotic atmosphere when tables and chairs are moved. The floor is a basic element. In a succession of different environments it expresses our will and direction of movement, with stairs, with surface differences, with tilted levels, with changes of material. This kind of communication can be also underlined by changes of light. In the vertical sense, on the other hand, it is the wall that guides us [...] The man who starts to tidy up nature, will start from the floor¹⁴.

The furnishing has to be light, mobile, and carefully thought out in terms of dimensions and proportions. The pieces of furniture then, have to be placed independently from the room and not be used to arrange the space; this proposition corresponds with the idea of avoiding the practice of creating architecture with furniture. The furniture has to be organised leaving the walls, ceiling and floors completely visible. The walls have to be addressed with simplicity, in most cases they should be painted white to expand the feeling of spaciousness and exalt the sense of immateriality of the walls. Extremely colourful rugs and oriental fabrics can be added to 'dress' (*verkleiden*) the room. As Strnad says:

Architecture is not an absolute goal. Humankind, first of all, has to be its starting point: and then it has to relate to nature. Organic nature is chaotic, free, infinite, variable. But the house, does not really belong to nature because it is essentially order [...] we need therefore, to



Josef Frank,
Casa Kahane, Vienna, 1930
 fig. 9. Tea garden Pavilion
 (Moderne Bauformen).

create harmony amongst disorder, nature's freedom and architectural order. We need then to move from nature to house, from freedom to architectonic order¹⁵.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Frank also states:

In a modern living space [furniture] is not a work of art, it is neither visible nor efficient or exciting, but rather it is comfortable without an actual motivation [...] The desire to turn a residential space into a work of art comes from a previous conception, when it was not possible to recognise the difference between art and a common object of everyday usage (*Gebrauchsgegenstand*)¹⁶.

The space within the home has the purpose of supplying a pleasant environment for its occupants. To generate a sense of well-being and pleasure the house has to be unpretentious.

In modern houses chaos is king, that is to say that there are no furnishings with a special purpose that, if moved, would ruin the harmony of the room. Every piece of furniture should be precisely placed [...] where it could be needed at a precise moment¹⁷.

As suggested by the name of the company, garden designing occupies a central place in *Haus & Garten*. Rudofsky assimilates from Frank the role of the garden, considered as the extension of the house and domestic life, a central position consolidated by the rich production of Frank's drawings for small pavilions and garden furnishings [fig. 9]. The theme is almost all the time the *Wohninsel* one, a private and intimate space, quiet and isolated. Frank brings the concept of the house into the garden and aims to erase the difference between inside and outside. The centrality of the garden is reflected in the use of wood and other 'living' materials "to carry a piece of nature into our halls and rooms!"¹⁸, and in the ongoing recurrence of floral motifs and, most of all, in the importance of openings, but also in the spatial devices of relation, link and mediation with the outside world, like bow-windows, lodges, doors, windows and balconies Frank designs and describes the house like a town, with its small lanes and squares¹⁹ reminiscent of Leon Battista Alberti's theories²⁰, the topic, in 1910, of his PhD doctorate research at the *Technische Hochschule* under the guidance of Karl König²¹, and of Camillo Sitte's urban principles (1843-1903)²², which he applies to the construction of single houses. Sitte's principles have contributed to the studying of the urban form, supporting the aesthetic necessity of modern cities and insisting on the relationship between empty spaces and buildings, expressing his own dissatisfaction with the monotony of straight roads and the isolation principles of monumental edifices, "The research for symmetry has become today a fashionable pathology"²³. He defends asymmetrical, urban arrangements, reminding us of how the ancient masters obtained good general solutions in irregular squares. In the section The irregularities of Old Plazas²⁴, Sitte defends the variety of irregular combinations of buildings and roads.

beside page

Josef Frank, Oskar Wlach,
Haus Beer, Vienna, 1929
 fig. 10. Interior
 (Innen Dekoration).



On the relationship between housing and cities, and between inside and outside, he writes:

For us modern stay-at-homes stairs are exclusively an interior motif, and we have become so sensitive in this connection and so unaccustomed to the hubbub of streets and plazas that we cannot work when someone is watching us, we do not like to dine by an open window because somebody could look in, and the balconies of our houses usually remain empty. It is precisely the external use of interior architectural elements (staircase, galleries, etc.) that is the most essential ingredient in the charm of ancient and medieval designs. The striking picturesqueness of Amalfi, for example, is due mainly to its really grotesque confusion between interior and exterior motifs, so that one finds oneself at the same time inside a house and on the street, and at one spot simultaneously on the ground level and on upper floor, depending on the interpretation one wishes to give the peculiar structural combination. It is this which leaves the collector of vistas in a transport of delight and is what we are presented with in the stage scenery of theaters. Yet a modern section of town is never chosen for stage scenery because it would really be much too dull²⁵.

Although controversial and less recognisable, the lesson learnt at the Technische Hochschule will be the 'dialectic' solution between Rudofsky's educational impositions and independent spirit. The asphyxiating environment of the Viennese Polytechnic will force him, as we will see, to find his own way onwards. At the 'conservative' Technische Hochschule students receive a solid technical, historical and 'stylistic' education whose merit is Karl König's (1841-1915), professor, director and head teacher of the school since 1913²⁶. Rudofsky's education then is influenced by the tradition that the Polytechnic of Architecture had developed since the end of the 19th century²⁷. Here he attends Max Theuer's courses (1878-1949), and those of Karl Holey (1879-1955), Max von Ferstel (1859-1936), Franz Krauss (1865-1942) and Siegfried Theiss's (1882-1963). The educational and study plan at the Technische Hochschule, in the years in which Rudofsky was a student, from 1922 to 1927, is articulated in a number of disciplines that contributed to the traditional École Polytechnique's competence, a scientific knowledge gained from the department of Engineering, together with the École des Beaux-Art's department of Art and Humanities. From technical subjects to history, drawing and art. Monika Platzer quotes Rudofsky's opinion on the school "a poor copy of the École des Beaux-Art"²⁸, and Andrea Bocco Guameri refers:

[Rudofsky] did not attach much importance to his university training [...] The professors who taught us the tricks of the trade were mostly aristocrats [...] In the course of their life they had bestowed upon the nation their quota of neo-baroque theaters, neo-gothic cathedrals and some such pseudomorphs. Of course, it wasn't their work that captivated us²⁹.

This is not the leavening agent to feed ideas on, it is just what partially happens at the university: "As a student, Rudofsky preferred plays, concerts and lessons at the



Josef Frank,
House, Werkbundsiedlung, Vienna, 1932
 fig. 11. Interior (Die Form).

previous page
 fig. 12. External view (Die Form).



*conservatory to his architecture lectures*³⁰. To prove all this is the fact that at that time he applies himself to theatrical setting projects [figs. 15-17]³¹. Guarneri continues:

Of greater importance still was the knowledge he acquired through the extended travels he undertook every summer, including a 1923 journey to Germany where he visited Weimar and the Bauhaus exhibition, a voyage down the Danube to Istanbul and further into Asia Minor in 1925, and trips to France in 1926, and Italy in 1927. He studied archaeological remains, traditional Mediterranean architecture, as well as recent Northern European buildings³².

During classes most of the time is spent on the teaching of the various types and styles of architecture. The distinction based on the 'style schools' is still quite important in the time between the two wars, their survival can still be observed in the programmes of exercises and homework given to the students as the *Studienplan der Bauschule*, the study plan of the *Technische Hochschule*³³. The drawing *Kandelaber im Korinthischen Stil* [fig. 13] is the result of the course



Architektonische Formenlehre, held by Max Theuer. As Rudofsky notes: "one frequently works on a page like this for a whole semester"³⁴. The drawing of the candelabrum shows the way in which works are assigned and what is expected of the students, which is to say knowing and working with historical forms and freely applying them. It is possible that Rudofsky did not find these experiences very interesting and the lessons altogether frustrating, but that did not mean that the projects and works realised in that context, and even more the decision to achieve a PhD between 1928 and 1931 with Theiss and Krauss, do not demonstrate a real interest for doing research and studying at the *Technische Hochschule*. Rudofsky's negative statements and rebelliousness are essentially related to the boredom caused by the teaching of the styles of the past, but it is important to remember that amongst these tedious teachings, Theuer, during the summer, held a 'mandatory' architectural photography course, which also included the drawing of the architectures analysed. Rudofsky states that his trips were organised in complete autonomy, without mentioning Theuer's course, but the documents show that the numerous photos and



fig. 13. Bernard Rudofsky,
 Travel, Mediterranean House [?], n.d.,
 Watercolor
 (photo: © MAK).

fig. 14. Bernard Rudofsky,
 "Kandelaber im korinthischen Stil",
 Candelabrum in the Corinthian Style,
 1924. Drawing made at the Technische
 Hochschule in Vienna, Course taught by
 Max Theuer (photo: © MAK).



ENTWURF FÜR EIN LANDHAUS IN NIEDERÖSTERREICH

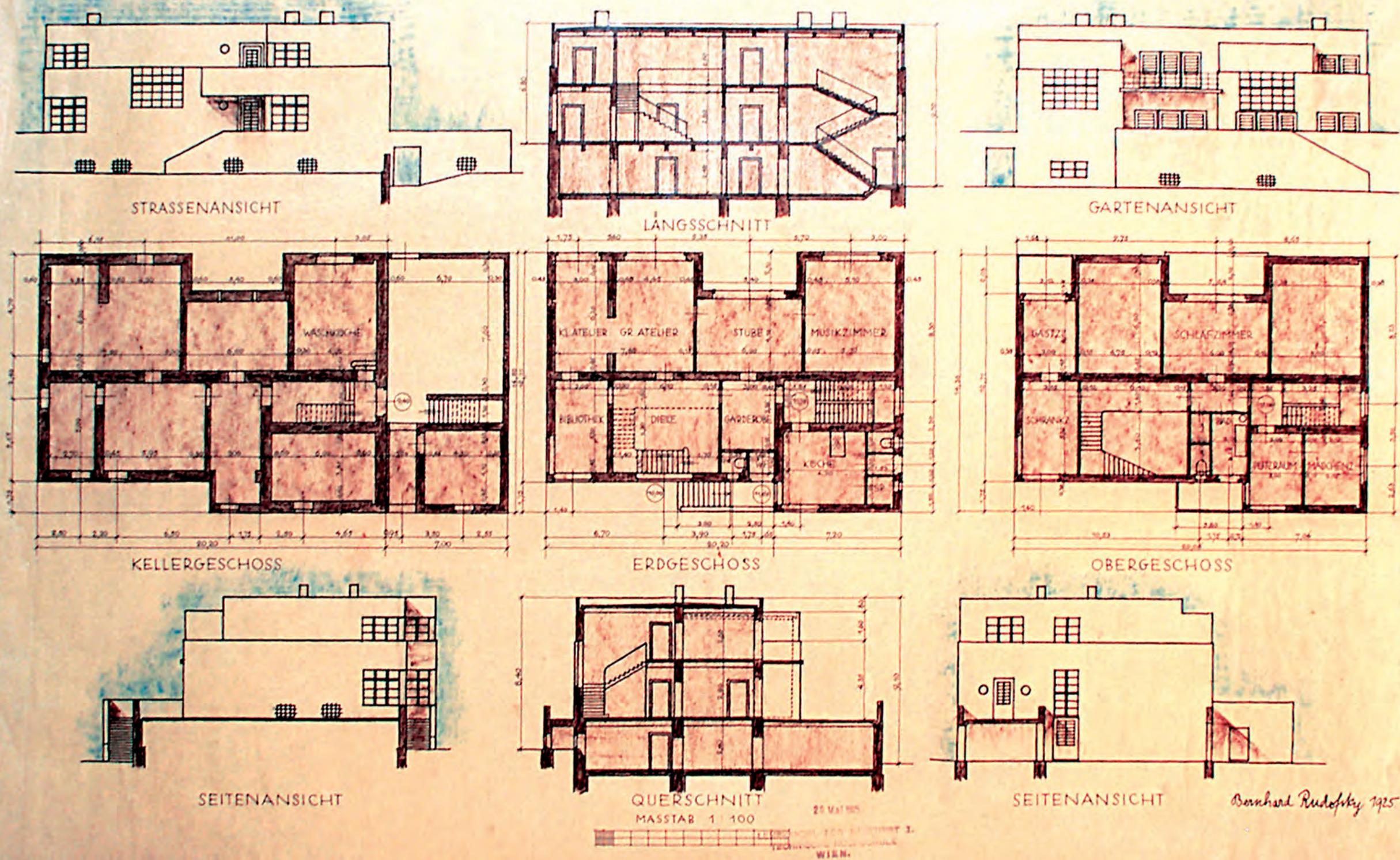


fig. 18. Bernhard Rudofsky, Project for a villa in Niederösterreich 1925 (photo: © MAK).

previous pages
figs. 15. 16. 17. Bernhard Rudofsky, scenography and costumes for Zauberflöte (photo: © MAK).



Georg Muche, Adolf Mejer,
Casa sperimentale AM HORN, 1923
 Bauhaus First Exhibition in Weimar.
 fig. 20. Ground floor (BHA).

fig. 21. External view (BHA).

beside page
 fig. 19. Bernard Rudofsky,
 Travel, Istanbul, Watercolor, 1925
 (The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles
 [920004]).

watercolours or mixed medium technique sketches [fig. 14]³⁵, were mainly the result of Max Theuer's course requirements. Rudofsky shows himself to be a student with an eye for the unusual. His study trips are very different to the ones of his colleague students of architecture, traditionally organised to visit the most important monuments of western European architectural history. That is why in 1925, during a trip along the Danube down to Istanbul, in his sketchbook, Rudofsky does not sketch down any famous architecture visited in the main cities (the only exception made is for Istanbul's Mosque) but he jots down instead little squares, buildings, wooden thatched houses, farm houses and hillside landscapes. The following year, when he goes to France, Rudofsky seems to be interested in certain canonical places for students of architecture, like Ile de la Cité with Notre Dame in Paris, but once again the majority of drawings show his attention for small churches and landscapes which are not normally included in the *Tour* [fig. 19]. Hostile to the study of the styles of the past, Rudofsky will also go to Sweden to visit the recent architectures by Asplund and Lewerentz and to Germany to study the *Neue Bauen's* plans. At the first Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar, in 1923, he has the opportunity to see the house *Am Horn* by Georg Muche and Adolf Meyer [figs. 20-21], built in just a few months for the exhibition. But his search for the modern at the *Bauhaus Ausstellung* will leave Rudofsky quite disappointed. Of that experience he writes:

One summer, curiosity led me to Weimar where the first Bauhaus exhibition had just opened. This was my first premonition of the ill wind that was to blow over the field of architecture. Weimar, and later Dessau, I found, had all the charm of a reformatory for juveniles³⁶.