Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

As We Saw It – Part 7: Emotional Rome

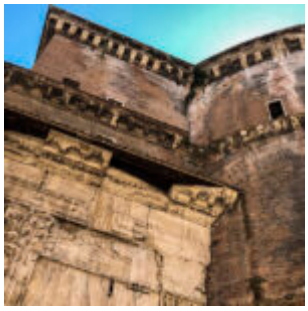
Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, January 2nd, 2019

Coming back to Rome is always emotional. It triggers pleasant memories of our days as students of architecture, of lifelong friendships, of great teachers, of great art, architecture, lifestyle. To link the central theme of "As We Saw It," 'what makes a city great,' with what we chose to document through film and photography, we focused on 'the city's emotional intelligence' and its connection to our own emotions. To do that, we decided to record streets and piazzas rather than buildings, with few exceptions, such as the Pantheon, the MAXXI and the church of Sant'Andrea Della Valle.

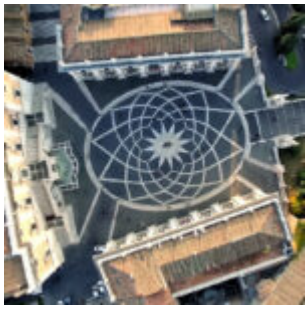
Piazza di Spagna

Pantheon – Panoramic view

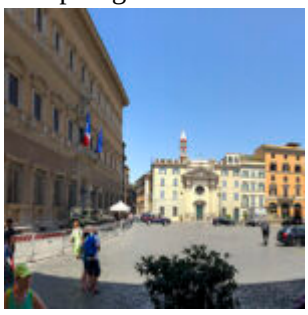
Pantheon's Dome



Pantheon detail

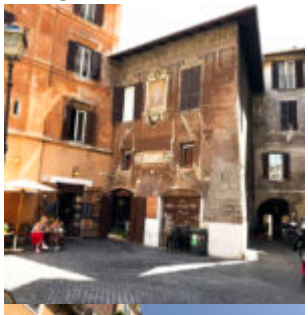


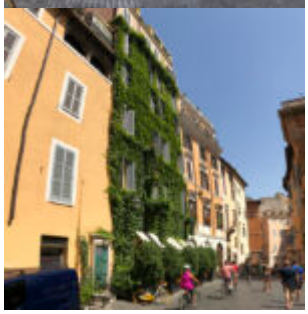
Campidoglio. Architect: Michelangelo

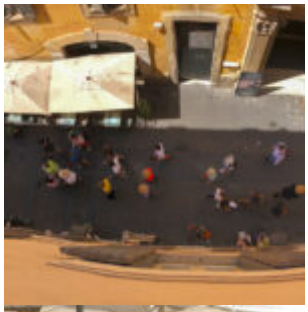


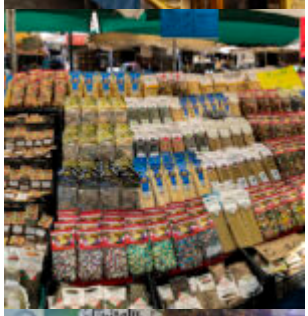
Piazza Farnese

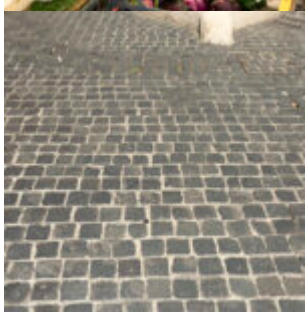
Bridge over street





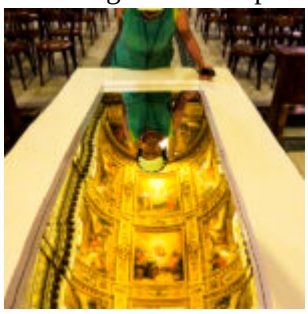




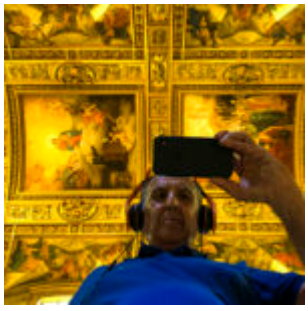


Bernini’s Elephant and Obelisk

Rick Meghiddo with parents. 1956 – Fontana di Trevi



Reflection at Sant'Andrea della Valle



Reflection at Sant'Andrea della Valle

Formative Past: Architecture and Cinema

We were "adopted" by Bruno Zevi soon after we joined his History of Architecture class. Besides tutoring our theses, he also invited us to his home to have lunch with Carlo Scarpa and connected us with Edgar Kaufmann Jr. in New York, who opened for us the gates of Wright's Fallingwater.

Our relationship with Pellegrin was also unique. He co-tutored our theses, and we worked for him on important projects: many competitions for schools, the University of Barcelona, Goree Island's master plan in Senegal, Palazzo Aldobrandini's restoration in Rome, and research on futuristic habitats.

Professor Bruno Zevi – Photo – Photo: Elisabeth Catalano

Some books by Bruno Zevi

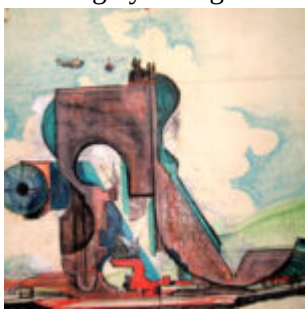
Books by Bruno Zevi

Architect Luigi Pellegrin

Duplex house, Rome, 1964 – Architect: Luigi Pellegrin

Duplex house, Rome, 1964 Architect: Luigi Pellegrin

Drawing by Pellegrin



Drawing by Pellegrin

Last meeting, 1998

When we moved to Rome to continue our studies in architecture, going to the movies was an essential way of learning Italian fast. We were also lucky.

In the vicinity of where we first lived, in the Parioli neighborhood, there was a cinema club at a church that showed every week movies followed by a Q&A with the directors. Among many others, we treasure having listened to Roberto Rossellini (Rome, Open City; Paisan; Stromboli) and Gillo Pontecorvo (The Battle of Algiers; Kapò; Burn!).

After graduation, we moved to Rome's Historic Center, minutes away from the Trevi Fountain and from Pellegrin's studio. Our same-floor neighbor was Adriana Chiesa, who, at the time worked at La Medusa, one of Italy's leading film distributors. We were friends when Adriana met and fell in love with cinematographer Carlo Di Palma (Divorce Italian Style, Red Desert, Blow-Up, Hanna and her Sisters, Radio Days.)

Carlo had a rich experience with directors like Michelangelo Antonioni (he shot Antonioni's first color film, Red Desert) and with Woody Allen. He also worked for Bernardo Bertolucci, Lucchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, Francesco Rosi, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. I remember his comments about Igmar Bergman ("he worked like a scientist") and about Federico Fellini ("a magician; he 'hypnotized' his actors, shooting without sound and talking to them while shooting.")

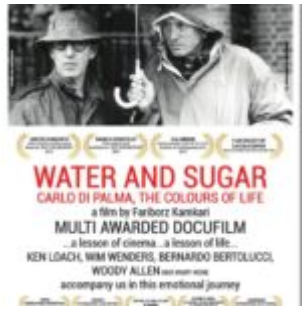
Rome, Open City. Director: Roberto Rossellini

Fellini’s La Dolce Vita – Marcello Mastroiani and Anita Ekberg

Monica Vitti

Carlo Di Palma, Adriana Chiesa and Woody Allen

Adriana Chiesa’s Posters



Water and Sugar Poster – Documentary on Carlo Di Palma

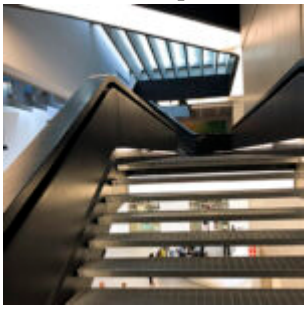
The MAXXI – Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo

Coincidentally with our visit, Zaha Hadid's-designed MAXXI held two exhibitions that we wanted to see: one dedicated to Zevi's 100th birthday, titled "Zevi's Architects. History and Counter-History of Italian Architecture 1944-2000." The other, "Tel Aviv the White City," dedicated to the Bauhaus architecture in the city.

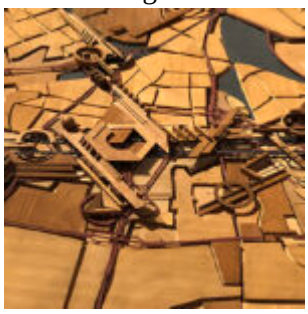
MAXXI – Lobby Architect: Zaha Hadid

MAXXI – View of ceiling

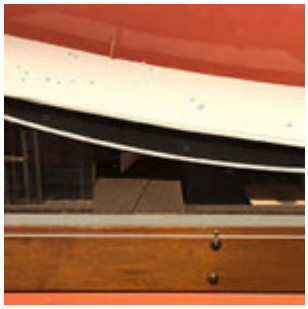
MAXXI – Shop


MAXXI

MAXXI – Igloo



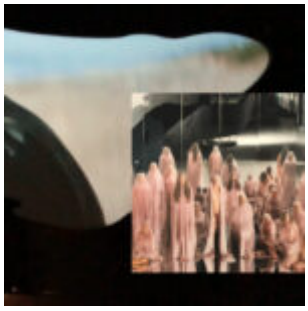
Asse Attrezzato – Plan for Rome, 1960s



Italian Pavilion, Montreal 1967

Italian Pavilion, Montreal 1967 – Plan

MAXXI – Projections Hall



MAXXI – Projections Hall

MAXXI – Tel Aviv White City Exhibition

MAXXI – Floor Aerial photo of Tel Aviv

As a historian and critic of architecture, Zevi's influence in Italy during the second half of the 20th Century was impacting. He published several pivotal books, such as Architecture as Space, The Language of Modern Architecture, A History of Modern Architecture, Erich Mendelsohn, was the editor of the magazine L'Architettura for over fifty years, taught history of architecture in Venice and in Rome, and was militant in the Radical Party, which he represented in the Chamber of Deputies from 1987 to 1992.

Zevi brought Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas of Organic Architecture to the Italian peninsula, which influenced many architects, such as Carlo Scarpa, Luigi Pellegrin, Paolo Soleri, Marcello D'Olivo, Giovanni Michelucci and Aldo Loris Rossi, to name just a few.

The exhibition on Tel Aviv's Bauhaus architecture, although very compact, provided an idea of the city's rich past, which includes over 1500 buildings of the period.

Rome's beauty is the ultimate urban beauty because it has been shaped by time, uninterruptedly, over more than two thousand years.

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