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## “ALDO ROSSI. Perspectives from the World”

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### **Aldo Rossi's transatlantic cross-fertilisation: American 'urban facts' and reinvention of design methods**

This paper examines the legacy of Aldo Rossi's thought and work applied to the United States. It is based on archival research of unpublished material and reveals unexplored aspects of Rossi's cross-fertilization with the north-American arena. In parallel, it analyses the role that his geographical relocation played on the metamorphosis of his theoretical, pedagogical and design strategies. It is based on a thorough analysis of the manuscripts of the conferences that Aldo Rossi gave in the United States, his correspondence and his notes in *Quaderni azzurri*. Particular attention is paid to the excavation of the events that gave birth to the publication of Rossi's *A Scientific Autobiography*, in 1981 in the United States. Despite the fact that this autobiography collects his notes over a period of ten years, during several of which he was still in Europe, it was not published before his involvement with the American architectural pedagogy. His attempt to systematize his trajectory, his design and pedagogical process, and his extra-disciplinary references contribute to the emergence of a new genre of interpretation of the conjunction between theory and design. How does Rossi's encounter with the north-American context fertilized his theoretical, pedagogical and design methods and how his legacy affected the dominant epistemological models in the north-American context?

Among the episodes scrutinized in order to respond to the above question are Rossi's collaboration with Oswald Mathias Ungers at Cornell University, his teaching at the Cooper Union and Yale University, and his connection to the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. The main objective is to show how Rossi's double preoccupation with individual expression and civic effectiveness of architecture evolved during his teaching in the United States. Rossi shared with Hejduk his interest in poetic imagination and with Ungers his concern about collective memory and *genius loci*. Rossi mentions: “when in past years at the Cooper Union and last year in the Institute I have been working with American students, I have preferred to choose themes linked to the American town, to your tradition and your experience”. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the design problems he gave to his students during his teaching in the United States, such as the “American academical village.” The presentation proceeds through a parallel interpretation of his pedagogical methods and his collective and solo American exhibitions, such as “Architecture I: Architectural Drawings” at Leo Castelli Gallery, “Aldo Rossi in America, 1976 to 1979” at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, “Architecture: Seven Architects” at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia and “Autonomous Architecture: The Work of Eight Contemporary Architects” at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum.

Rossi says to Diana Agrest, in 1979, in an interview for *Skyline*: “I have seen huge complexes of one-family houses in California and mobile-homes in Texas, as well as the new buildings in New York City, and, personally, I found them stimulating”. As he affirms, Rossi associates his excitement when visiting American cities with the fact “they are loaded with living history”. Departing from Rossi's thesis claiming that the knowledge of a city enables new methods of design had “never appeared so clearly to” him as when he “saw the city of New York, and above all Manhattan”, the paper examines the effect that his encounter with the American urban facts had on his design methods.