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concinnitās

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Analogical Syntax

Form and Association in Three Projects by Aldo Rossi

Cameron McEwan

Aldo Rossi's analogical architecture uses elements from the history of architecture and the city, but erases and abstracts their historical accretion, through their reinterpretation in a modernist, purified language. Cubes, giant-order columns, slabs, gables, or square windows, once liberated from their historical urban context, are analogues that become interchangeable elements to be composed on axial, linear, square or central plans, repeated from project to project through operations of dislocating, doubling, distancing, crossing, scaling. The analogue is here proposed as a critical device toward a methodological and theoretical project of formal and associative syntax that transforms the history of architecture into material for a new architecture.

The following drawings close-read the formal and associative syntax of Aldo Rossi's analogical architecture. Rossi's buildings are normally understood as coherent wholes. Instead, the studies put forward a reading of their dis-articulation, cutting apart and highlighting the separation of elements and forms in three projects. The drawings develop a method of analytical de-montage, that separates the principle elements of each building and links the formal analysis to a series of images with wider architectural resonance, to suggest formal or conceptual associations and develop a dialogue across history.¹

The project for *Scandicci Town Hall* reads as an analogue of Cesare Beruto's plan for the Castello Sforza in Milan, which arranges distinct elements along an axis similarly to Scandicci, where an elevated walkway connects a courtyard block to a domed hall via gable and giant order elements that intersect perpendicularly. In the *Study of Gallarate Housing*, the separation of the slab is articulated by steps and four giant order circular columns, suggestive of Filarete's column in Venice or Le Corbusier's studies of the Parthenon. Meanwhile the Gallarate shares an intensity of form that is present in the tenements of Milan, mixed with references to Le Corbusier's *Unité* or Hilberseimer's bar buildings. Finally, in the *Study of San Cataldo Cemetery at Modena*, the composition of the cemetery through separate elements, axially arranged and set within a colonnaded perimeter, recalls traditional Roman city planning; the central area is not unlike Piranesi's studies of the Castel Sant'Angelo in his *Campo Marzio* project. The aerial perspective of the cemetery reads similar to Mantegna's *Dead Christ*, a painting at Milan's Pinacoteca di Breda.

1. The images are extracted primarily from these sources: Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, trans. by Lawrence Venuti (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1981); Luigi Ghirri and Aldo Rossi, *Luigi Ghirri-Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves*, ed. by Paolo Costantini (Montreal/Milan: CCA/Electa, 1996); Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* [1966], trans. by Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982). For good monographs of Rossi's drawings and projects refer: Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1979*, ed. by Peter Eisenman (IAUS New York: MIT Press, 1979); Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi, Projects and Drawings, 1962-1979*, ed. by Francesco Moschini (Florence: New York: Rizzoli, 1979); Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Drawings and Paintings*, ed. by Morris Adjmi and Giovanni Bertolotto (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993).

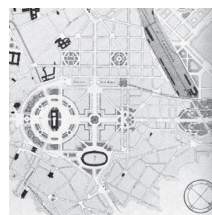
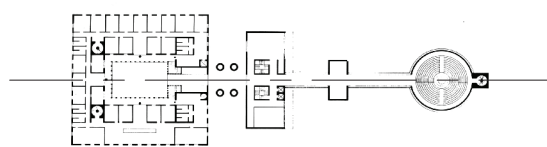
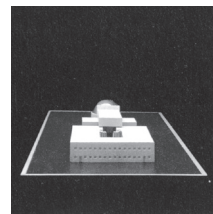
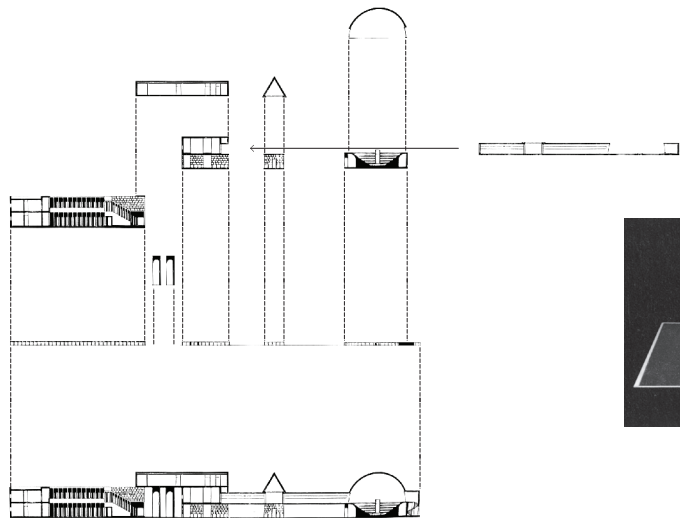
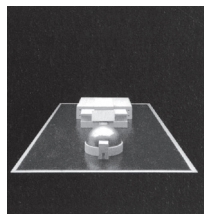
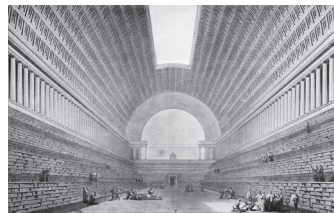


Figure 1
Study of Scandicci Town Hall by Aldo Rossi
with Massimo Fortis and Massimo Scolari, 1966

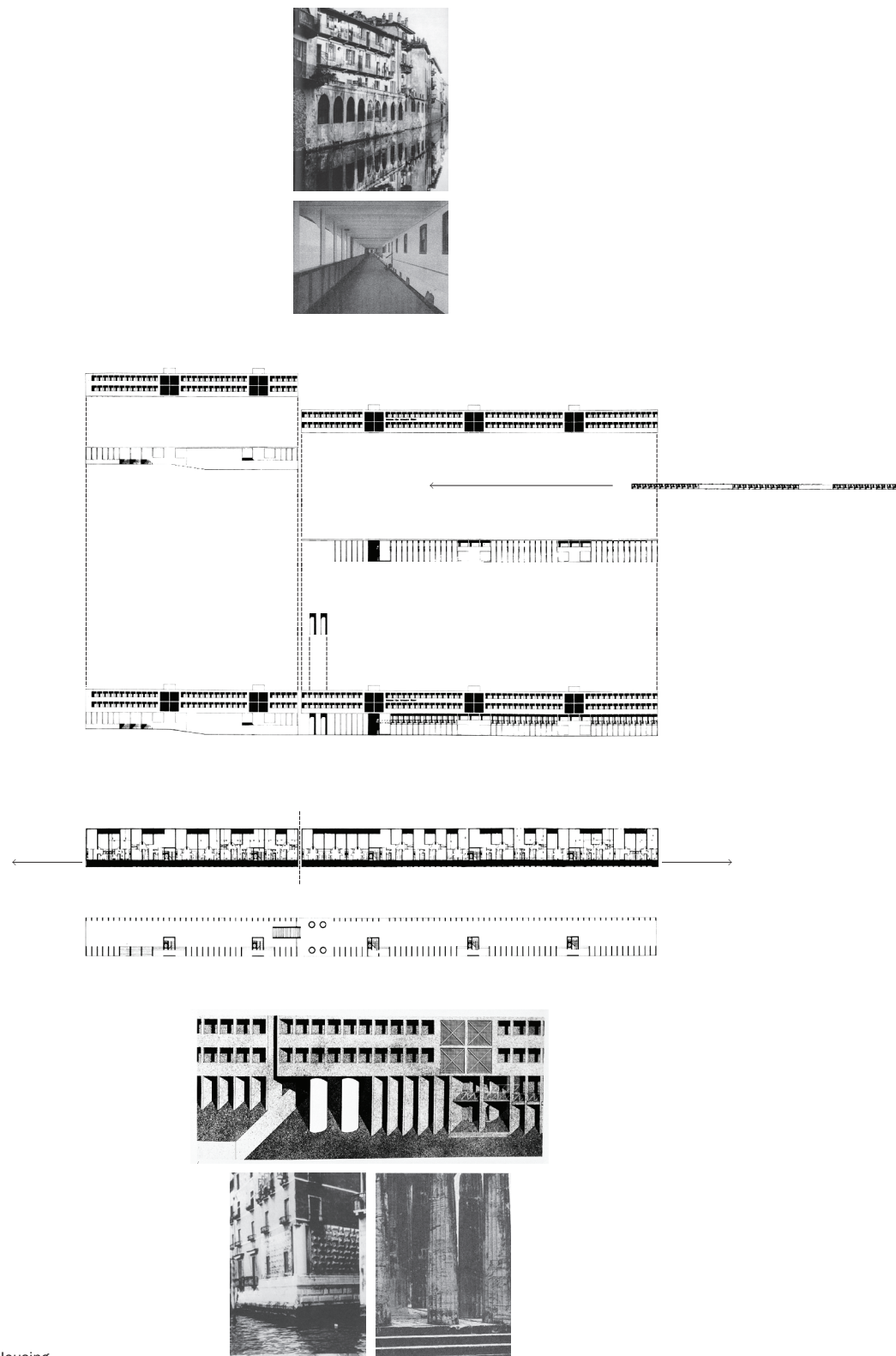


Figure 2
Study of Gallarate Housing
by Aldo Rossi, 1968-73

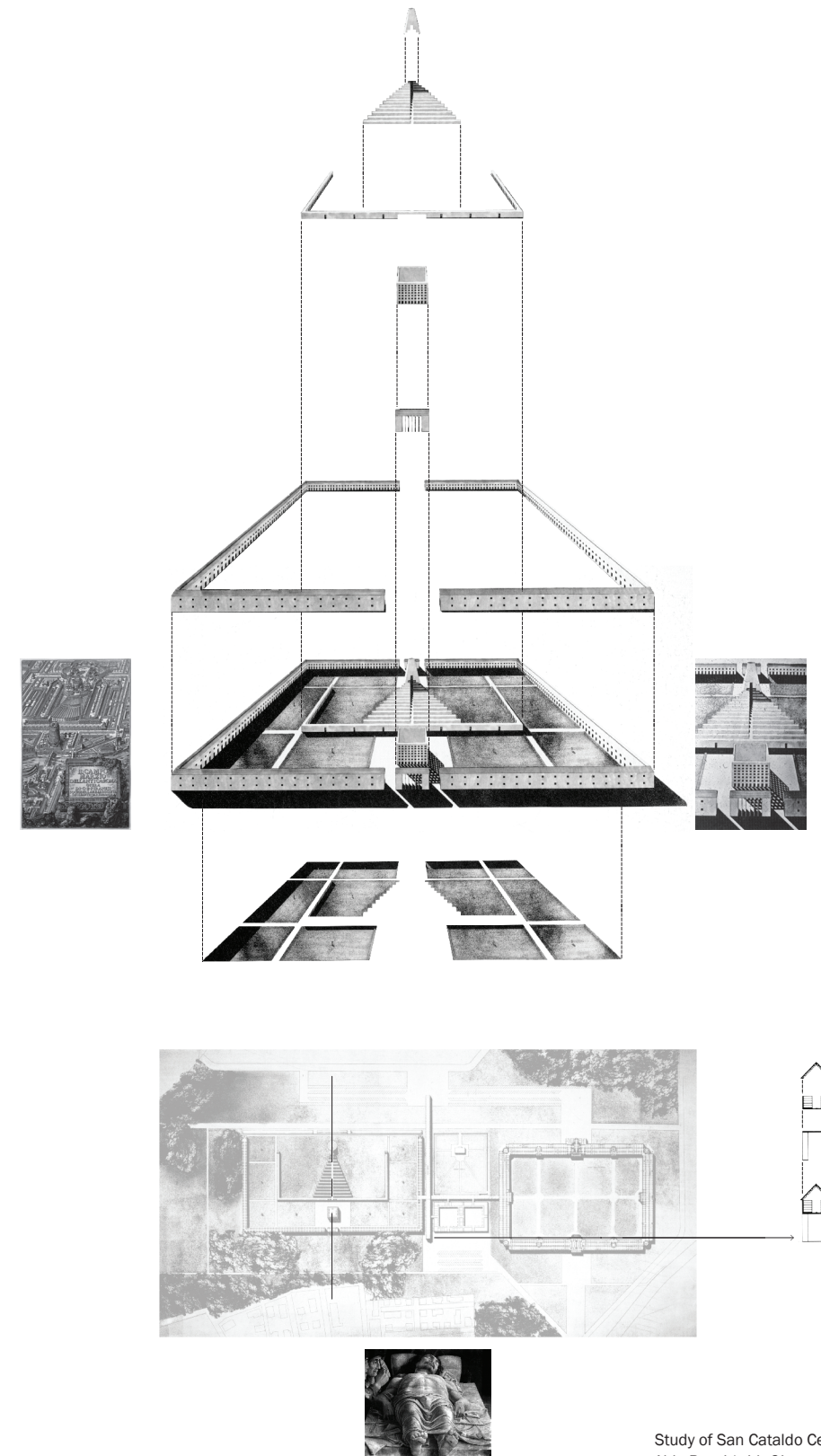


Figure 3
Study of San Cataldo Cemetery at Modena
by Aldo Rossi (with Giovanni Braghieri), 1972-84