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Building versus Bildung. Manfredo Tafuri and the construction of a historical discipline

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2005

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Hoekstra, T. R. (2005). *Building versus Bildung. Manfredo Tafuri and the construction of a historical discipline*. s.n.

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BUILDING VERSUS *BILDUNG*

COLOFON:

Ontwerp kaft, binnenwerk, illustraties: De Jongens Ronner Groningen

Druk: Facilitair Bedrijf RUG

ISBN: 9036723094

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Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

BUILDING VERSUS *BILDUNG*

Manfredo Tafuri and the construction of a historical discipline

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van het doctoraat in de

Letteren

aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

op gezag van de

Rector Magnificus, dr. F. Zwarts,

in het openbaar te verdedigen op

donderdag 8 september 2005

om 14.45 uur

door

Titia Rixt Hoekstra

geboren op 15 april 1969

te Joure

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PREFACE

February 25th 1994 was a special day for me. While spending the academic year as an Erasmusstudent at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, that day I witnessed an event that made a deep impression on me. Before I went to Venice, my professor in Groningen advised me to follow the courses of Manfredo Tafuri, which he recommended as being special. Once arrived in Venice, I took his advice seriously and went to listen to a professor whose performance was dominated by his poor health. Professor Tafuri seemed physically weak, but very strong in his analyses of architecture, in his ability to build up a discourse consisting of architects, buildings and political, cultural and intellectual history. However, little could I imagine that the course *Arte, Politica e architettura nella Roma medicea (1513-1527). Dal mito dell' "eta' d'oro" alla catastrofe del sacco* was actually Tafuri's last course. On Wednesday 23 February Tafuri died in his sleep because of heart failure. Being assembled in the courtyard of the Tolentini building on 25 February, around Tafuri's coffin, went beyond my imagination. Although there are a good few professors who demonstrate a considerable involvement in the *civitas Academia*, I think very few of them would imagine their funeral service being held in the university courtyard. While listening to Cacciari's funeral speech, I realized how much Tafuri's thinking about architectural history had been a part of an ethical conviction concerning life. Beyond any display of brilliance, any intellectual superiority, it became clear to me that this was the most profound message that Tafuri could pass on to us, his young students.

Many years have past since I walked in Venice, discussing the work of Tafuri and Cacciari with my colleague student Bernard Kormoss. They were years in which it became increasingly clear to me that a study of this size is always the work of a collective, notwithstanding the many hours of work invested by an enthusiastic 'AIO'. In the last stage of this dissertation, both my 'promotor', Ed Taverne, and my sister, Hanneke Hoekstra, formed an unconventional, yet very inspiring team, whose guidance proved indispensable for the completion of this study. I thank Ed Taverne for his honesty in pointing at the weak points of my approach; I realize now that those criticisms were of greater value to me than any kind of 'cheap' appraisal. The analytical and conceptual skills of my sister were a crucial help for me when sometimes I lost my way in the jungle of Italian architectural theory; when everything seemed equally important to me. I am also indebted to prof. dr. Frank Ankersmit for his expertise comments on my work. Although the book I wrote is quite different from what we envisaged at the start, his insights have been a constant intellectual stimulus.

Discussions with fellow students have laid the foundation of this book. I thank Bernard Kormoss for providing me with an initial, yet very thorough insight in the work of both Tafuri and Cacciari. Roberto Zancan, Alberto Mozzato and Luka Skansi have been very generous in offering me their help, which ranged from drinking a good glass of wine to delving in the library in search of some document or other. As a student, Federico Rosa had the courage to confront 'il maestro' from within the I.U.A.V., resulting in a very interesting master thesis about the first professional years of Manfredo Tafuri. I am also indebted to prof. dr. Sergio Polano and prof. dr. Donatella Calabi for their support and interest in my work. When this book was nearly finished, Marco Biraghi's *Progetto di Crisi, Manfredo Tafuri e l'architettura contemporanea* (Milan, 2005) was published.

Although I read the book while editing my dissertation, I have not been able to include it in my bibliography.

This research would not have been possible without the support of various organizations that facilitated my research. I thank the NIR in Rome and the NWO for enabling my study in Italy. I also thank prof. dr. Stuart Woolf in Venice for providing me with a Marie Curie Fellowship within the framework of the European Doctorate Program 'Building on the Past'. In Groningen, the Promovendi-en Postdoc Centre has been of vital importance for the completion of my dissertation. The PPC was a pillar of stability in the final, stressful stages of the making of this book. Not in the least, I thank all my colleagues at the PPC for their friendship and for being sparring-partners. I thank Lenny Vos and Arend Jagersma for sharing all the frustrations of being a junior research student with me. Lenny remained a faithful travelling companion, also within the PPC. I am indebted to prof. dr. Mineke van Essen for giving me a place within the PPC, to Renske Brandsma and Henny Kikkert for their organizational and financial support. I also thank Fiona McGowan for correcting my English.

My parents have been a silent force on the background from the first day of this project to its conclusion. It is a remarkable and comforting thought to know that they love me not for what I write or accomplish, but for who I am. I thank my sister Marike for her enduring friendship. Finally, the last words of this preface should be dedicated to a little girl with blond hair and blue eyes who refuses to wear anything other than pink dresses. This is my little niece Jits. She has been a tremendous help by taking me to the local 'cafeteria' to buy ice cream for her and by seducing me into the 'Blokker' to buy a gift for her, providing it was less than three euros. To her I dedicate this book.



Istituto Universitario
di Architettura di Venezia

Dipartimento di Storia
dell'architettura

Dottorato di ricerca in Storia dell'architettura
e della città, scienze delle arti, restauro

“Fare Storia”

GIOVEDÌ 12 DICEMBRE, ORE 10,00

James Ackerman (Harvard University)
Ruminations on Sixty-plus Years as an Architectural Historian in America

Jaques Revel (EHESS, Parigi)
Biographie et histoire sociale

Remo Bodei (Università di Pisa)
Pensare il futuro o come l'utopia si è separata dalla storia

GIOVEDÌ 12 DICEMBRE ORE 15,30

Sergio Bertelli (Università di Firenze)
Il messaggio iconografico come fonte non verbale

Howard Burns (DSA, IUAV)
Quante storie! Frammentazione e approcci unitari nella storia dell'architettura

Giovanni Levi (Università di Venezia, Cà Foscari)
Gli storici, la psicoanalisi, la verità

VENERDÌ 13 DICEMBRE ORE 10,00

Adriano Prosperi (Università di Pisa)
Storia del battesimo

Massimo Firpo (Università di Torino)
Pittura ed eresia nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Jacopo Pontormo e Lorenzo Lotto

Manuela Morresi (DSA, IUAV)
Religione e architettura a Venezia nel primo Cinquecento: quali relazioni?

VENERDÌ 13 DICEMBRE ORE 15,30

Joseph Connors (Villa I Tatti, Firenze)
Licenza di fare storia

Donatella Calabi (DSA, IUAV)
Circolazione del denaro, circolazione delle idee: casi di storia comparata

Giorgio Chittolini (Università Statale, Milano)
Ricerche e dibattiti sulla storia politica della società italiana fra XII e XVII secolo

SABATO 14 DICEMBRE ORE 10,00

Franco Rella (DADI, IUAV)
La storia, le storie

TAVOLA ROTONDA CONCLUSIVA

'fare storia' announcement of the conference

12|12

12-13-14 dicembre 2002
Aula Manfredo Tafuri
Palazzo Badoer

INTRODUCTION: ABOUT DIFFERENT TAFURI'S.

*Nur wer sich wandelt, bleibt mit mir verwandt.
Friedrich Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse.*

The twelfth of December 2002 was a special date for the history department of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia. It was the first day of a conference called 'Fare Storia' – 'Doing History'.¹ The first speaker, although not announced on the programme, was the architectural historian Francesco Dal Co. His words were a brief comment on the theme of the conference, and perhaps also on the event itself.

→ Today in the newspapers we read about 'doing history'. But does one 'do' history? What does this actually mean? Is it possible to do history; is it possible to write objective texts about the past? ...History is that which enchants because it disenchant. But history can never speak the ultimate words because it never gives any certainties. 'Doing history' then means action in the light of this challenge. It means occupying oneself with that which is not ours, with that which we have lost, with what has evaded us. We don't possess history, we don't comprehend it. There are no last words in history.²

The conference was presented as the first part of a new PhD programme in architectural history but was not an easy introduction to the topic. Usually seminars and conferences in architectural history deal with specific themes, such as 'The Algiers Project of Le Corbusier', or 'City-planning in Nineteenth-century France'. It is already relatively rare in architectural history to find a conference dedicated to the position of the actual historian, to the craft, or the act of 'doing'. However, what made this conference even more unique was that the first lines of its introduction addressed issues at the highest level of abstraction. As one student remarked rather desperately during the second day of the conference: 'I have just started this PhD programme and I would like to receive some concrete assistance, a helping hand in how to go about my research. Instead you confront me with very abstract reflections about the writing of architectural history.'³ The particular character of this conference had everything to do with the legacy of a very influential architectural historian, one who had spent the greater part of his life teaching at the Department of

¹ A conference under the name 'Fare Storia' is organized every year by the staff of the PhD programme 'Il Dottorato in Storia dell'architettura e della città, Scienze delle arti, Restauro', at the School for Advanced Studies in Venice Foundation, Venice. Senior architectural historians, art historians and historians speak about their experiences of 'doing history'. After these lectures, the PhD students are given the chance to ask questions and enter into discussion with the academics.

² 'Fare Storia' conference, Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, Dipartimento di Storia dell'architettura, 12-14 December 2002, introduction by Francesco Dal Co. Speaking about recent newspaper reports, Dal Co specifically referred to a resolution that was accepted by the Italian Chamber on 12 December 2002, which obliged the Minister of Education to regulate the contents of the history books used in schools. This proposal and its approval by Berlusconi's government raised a storm of protest among leftist and centre parties. Carlo Giovanardi, from the Udc (Unione Democratico Cristiano di Centro, the former Christian Democrats) said: 'It is not the task of the executive to control the objectivity of books about history'. *La Repubblica*, 'Testi di storia, contrari i centristi', 12 December 2002.