

4th - 9th December 2018

STUDIO 2 - ARCHITECTURE TRIP TO ITALY

I was lucky enough to participate in our annual architecture studio trip this year, which was set in Italy. Through the course of four days we visited four cities; Milan, Bologna, Urbino and Florence. The pace at which we saw each of the cities really allowed us to appreciate the contrasts between these urban environments. The time scale forced us to focus very specifically on the university buildings within each of the cities; the topic of this year's studio.

We arrived in Milan a little before the studio tutors, which allowed us a little time to explore the city on our own, and see some of the more touristic monuments. In the afternoon we visited the La Triennale di Milano, as they coincidentally were exhibiting a retrospective on ruins, which is the topic of my dissertation. The museum established the context of modern Italian design, which would be key to understanding the architecture which we visited throughout the rest of our trip.

The following day we decided to make a quick visit to the Fondazione Prada, before we had planned to meet our tutors. The complex was designed by OMA, led by Rem Koolhaas, and offered an interesting perspective into the more luxurious side of Milan's architectural portfolio. Within the compound, Wes Anderson designed a cafe, with the ambiance of one of his decorative film sets.

We met with our tutors and who lead us to the Bocconi University, where we were able to spend time recording and analysing the spaces. This offered an interesting insight into the modern fabrication of university buildings within such dense city environments. The afternoon was spent with our tutors exploring the more hidden and residential areas of Milan.

The next morning we swiftly caught a train to Bologna. Once we had arrived in the city the day was spent visiting many older examples of university architecture. This offered a good contrast with Milan. Bologna is renowned for its university and student culture. The institutions seemed to blend into the city and create a strong relationship with the general public. We also visited a few christian complexes, as these were the sites of some of the earliest forms of education.

Urbino was our next location, a very small, yet picturesque town in the Italian hills. This city is equally dominated by its university culture, however the buildings which facilitate this learning also create a complex relationship with the public quarters, appearing to sink into the landscape, and emerge from the small cracks in the medieval city walls.

From the sleeping and serene hills of Urbino, we traveled to Florence for the final full day of our trip. Hoping to avoid the crowds, we visited several of the cities churches, analysing their facades in particular. A great deal of the day was spent walking through the city and recording the complex, weaving urban fabric. We spent the afternoon in the Museo San Marco, which was home to a huge collection of frescos by Fra Angelico decorate the walls of this monastery. The monastic architecture also became relevant in regards to university building, as they have a similar relationship with regards to integrating into the city but also acting as sites of learning and contemplation.

