

898

EDUARDO SOUTO
DE MOURA
CENTRALE ELETTRICA,
DIGA FOZ TUA

RESTAURI
WERNER TSCHOLL,
TONI GIRONÈS, RUCH & PARTNER

TEATRI
ANAND SONECHA,
WITHERFORD WATSON MANN

40 ANNI FA
IL TEATRO DEL MONDO
DI ALDO ROSSI

CASABELLA

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SCAN & BUY —

96



1665—
Gerardo de Simone
**Il Beato Angelico a Roma
1445-1455.**
Rinascita delle arti e
Umanesimo cristiano
nell'Urbe di Niccolò V e
Leon Battista Alberti
Leo S. Olschki editore, Firenze
2017



ISBN 9788822265128

Alberto Giorgio Cassani

Beato Angelico. Un albertiano alla corte di Niccolò V?

Cosa lega il *pictor angelicus*, *alter Apelles* e *alter lottus*¹, per secoli considerato «pittore mistico tardomedievale»², rappresentante dell'estetica tomista della luce³ e sostenitore di una «teologia cristiana della storia»⁴, al primo architetto moderno, Leon Battista Alberti? Molto, almeno a leggere il ponderoso e accuratissimo – anche nella sontuosa veste editoriale di Leo S. Olschki editore – volume di Gerardo de Simone, frutto di un'elaborazione più che decennale dell'originaria tesi dottorale. Sulla ricostruzione dei cicli di affreschi realizzati nei due soggiorni romani di Fra Giovanni da Fiesole – oltre a quelli della celebre Cappella Niccolina, quelli perduti della Cappella del Sa-



cramento, del Coro di San Pietro e dello Studiolo di Niccolò V, le opere su tavola commissionategli da figure eminenti del collegio cardinalizio, nonché quelle progettate, se non eseguite e dirette, per i domenicani della basilica di Santa Maria sopra Minerva – chi scrive non è in grado di esprimere un giudizio di qualche valore, per cui lascia la parola ad Alessandro Zuccari, prefatore del volume ed esperto dell'Angelico, che definisce le pagine di De Simone «la prima organica ricostruzione dell'Angelico "romano"»⁵, il che fa del volume «un'opera di ampio respiro, indispensabile ai futuri studi sul primo Rinascimento italiano»⁶.

Ma sul rapporto, necessariamente tutto indiziario, tra l'Angelico e l'Alberti, il volume pone molte stimolanti domande e questioni. A cominciare da una prima affinità tra i due grandi artisti: così come per l'Alberti – per quasi tutta la sua vicenda terrena, nel suo caso⁷ – anche per l'Angelico, almeno per quanto riguarda la storia dei due soggiorni romani, cioè gli ultimi dieci anni della sua vita, questa è fatta «di assenze e di lacune». Il che, qualcuno potrebbe malignare, potrebbe prestarsi, come è avvenuto spesso per l'Alberti, a ipotesi di rapporti e di attività spesso molto fantasiose, incorrendo in quel «panalbertismo» in cui la critica è a volte caduta. Non è il caso delle pagine di De Simone. Il volume si apre con un capitolo molto ben documentato e aggiornato sulle posizioni critiche più recenti e accreditate, dedicato ai due pontificati di Eugenio IV e Niccolò V. A questo ne segue un secondo che affronta, sinteticamente, ma con cognizione di causa, lo spinosissimo tema della Roma di Niccolò V. Il terzo e ultimo capitolo, prima di entrare *in medias res* con le pagine dedicate all'Angelico, è quello riservato a un altro e forse ancor più «scivoloso» argomento, quello della presenza dell'Alberti «architetto» a Roma. Senza entrare nelle due *vexatæ quæstiones*, basterà sintetizzare la posizione dell'autore sul ruolo effettivo dell'Alberti nel fatto di tenere «non effimera»⁸ la presenza dell'Alberti alla corte di papa Parentucelli. De Simone non si limita a una dichiarazione generica, ma la suffraga con l'ipotesi attributiva all'Al-

berti del pavimento della Cappella Niccolina¹⁰. È il caso di spendere due parole su questa ipotesi. L'attribuzione all'Alberti del pavimento viene al termine del più lungo capitolo del libro di De Simone, il quinto, intitolato *La Cappella Niccolina*, nel quale l'autore, attraverso una serie di confronti per nulla peregrini fra testi albertiani – il *De pictura*, soprattutto, e il *De re aedificatoria* – e affreschi angelicani, arriva a individuare, assai prima di Piero e di Mantegna, nell'Angelico, il «pittore dell'Alberti», per esser stato l'Angelico «certamente in rapporti con l'Alberti a Firenze e soprattutto a Roma»¹¹ e «capace di tradurre in pittura le teorie albertiane»¹². Tanto da farlo concludere, in modo deciso, che «è nella Cappella Niccolina, negli affreschi che segnano il prepotente irrompere dell'Architettura (classica, paleocristiana, rinascimentale)¹³ nell'opera dell'Angelico, che si può più concretamente vagliare la realizzazione compiuta di un ciclo pittorico propriamente "albertiano", senza correre il rischio di riscontri vaghi e generici, e troppo facilmente coestensibili»¹⁴. Ma dicevamo del pavimento. De Simone individua condivisibili prove a favore di un *lineamentum* albertiano parlando dell'analogico sole intarsiato nel timpano di Santa Maria Novella. L'autore non lo segnala, ma è identica la presenza di due cerchi concentrici che, nel caso della chiesa fiorentina, ha fatto ipotizzare, qualche decennio fa, una possibile previsione di eclissi da parte dell'Alberti «astronomo»¹⁵.

Oltre a ciò, la presenza del motivo del «vaso biancato, con coppa baccellata e collo rastremato»¹⁶ avvicina il pavimento della Cappella alla mostra del portale della medesima basilica fiorentina. E non sarà un caso che questa appartenga all'ordine domenicano, lo stesso di Fra Giovanni. L'Angelico e l'Alberti, dunque, si sarebbero incontrati, faccia a faccia (pavimento-pareti), nel *Sancta Sanctorum* vaticano. Ad altri storici, ora, l'ardua sentenza.

1. Definizioni contenute nei titoli di due saggi precedenti dell'autore: «Velut alter Apelles». II decennio romano del Beato Angelico, in *Beato Angelico*. *L'alba del Rinascimento*, catalogo della mostra (Roma, Musei Capitolini, 7 aprile-5 luglio 2009), a cura di Alessandro Zuccari, Giovanni Morello, Gerardo de Simone, Skira, Milano 2009, pp. 129-143 e «Velut alter lottus». II Beato Angelico e i suoi «profeti trecenteschi», in «1492. Rivista della Fondazione Piero della Francesca», II, n. 2, 2009 (ma 2010), pp. 41-66.

2. Gerardo de Simone, *Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455. Rinascita delle arti e Umanesimo cristiano nell'Urbe di Niccolò V e Leon Battista Alberti*, Leo S. Olschki editore, Firenze 2017, p. 266.

3.

Ibid., p. 194

4. *Ibid.*

5. Alessandro Zuccari, *Prefazione*, *ibid.*, pp. IX-XI: XI.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Gli scarsissimi documenti che

Leon Battista Alberti ci ha

lasciato sono stati raccolti prima

da Girolamo Mancini (*Vita de*

Leon Battista Alberti, G.C.

Sanson, Firenze 1882; Tip. G.

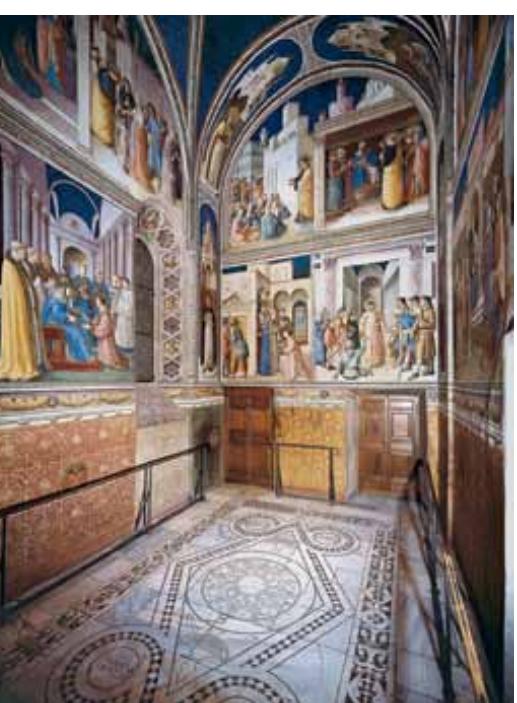
Carnesecchi e Figli, Firenze

10. L'autore, inoltre, *en passant*, sostiene anche un'altra possibile autografia albertiana, ipotizzata per prima da Karoline Lanckoronska (*Zu Raffaels Logien*, in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, IX, 1935, pp. 111-120 e poi da Toby E.S. Yuen (*The*

1 Beato Angelico, *Martirio di san Lorenzo* (particolare con le statue della Fortezza, Prudenza, Ercole), 1448, Città del Vaticano, Palazzi Vaticani, Cappella Niccolina

2 Veduta interna della Cappella Niccolina (verso l'altare), 1448, Città del Vaticano, Palazzi Vaticani

3 Veduta interna della Cappella Niccolina (verso la parete d'ingresso), 1448, Città del Vaticano, Palazzi Vaticani



Biblioteca Graeca: Castagno, *Alberti and Ancient Sources*, in «The Burlington Magazine», CXII, n. 812, 1970, pp. 725-736), della *Biblioteca Graeca*, nella facies niccolina, nei Palazzi Vaticani, soprattutto sulla base del passo del *De re aedificatoria*, IX 4 sulla raffigurazione di colonne dipinte nei rivestimenti delle pareti. Cosa che è effettivamente realizzata nella *Biblioteca Graeca*.

11. G. de Simone, *Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455...*, cit., p. 193.

12. *Ibid.*

13. De Simone arriva a ravvisare nella scena della *Predicazione di santo Stefano e Disputa nel Sinedrio* (1448) la citazione di palazzo Rucellai nell'edificio sulla sinistra dell'affresco.

14. G. de Simone, *Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455...*, cit., pp. XIII-XVI: XV.

15. Gabriel Blumenthal, *Una profezia astronomica di Leon Battista Alberti*, in «Labyrinthos», vol. 7-8, n. 13-16 (1988-1989), pp. 63-80. Un analogo sole è affrescato sulla parete della cappella di San Sigismondo nel Tempio Malatestiano a Rimini.

16. G. de Simone, *Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455...*, cit., p. 197.

The new design takes the place of a temporary structure that made a beloved summer opera festival possible. The specificity of the intervention has led to the use of unconventional solutions from a typological-function and structural-conceptive viewpoint. The absence of a fly tower and a foyer has made this theater space special and informal. The beauty of the surrounding territory makes the access through a large green outdoor space in front of the existing volume into a memorable experience. A large gate placed on the southern side becomes the entrance to the large hall, through a series of wooden portals that act as filters when closed, and when open offer direct access to the seating area. Inside, we are greeted by slight darkness. The lack of a foyer, a vestibule between outside and inside, means that we pass from the sunny outer world into a shadowy interior: to counter this effect, the architects have placed a large skylight, which can be darkened, over the seating whose slow mechanism for opening and closing allows the eyes to get accustomed to the various phases prior to the start of the performance. From the outside, the opera house does not rise above the level of the existing building, so the presence of the new architecture inside is not perceptible.

This complex also contains the

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahaly museum, an important work by Charles Correa from 1958-63, composed of a grouping of 51 modules with a square plan of 6x6 meters, forming a large shelter providing shade, in which the story of Gandhi is narrated.

The theater has been built for the centenary of the construction of the Ashram and is the latest portion of a complex system of constructions for learning and the growth "of the body, mind and spirit of men and children" (Gandhi).

To describe this project, we thought it would be meaningful to ask Siza himself to share his perspective with us, and to speak –through the following text– about the force and intensity of this work of architecture.

page 73

The effect of proportional measurement
Álvaro Siza

Anand Sonecha recently came to visit me. We talked about Doshi, whom I met in Philadelphia and admire very much, with whom he studied and worked for five years.

Sonecha showed me something of his work, photographs and some handsome drawings.

I was deeply impressed by the outdoor theater he made in Ahmedabad: an enclosure bordered by a white spiral wall. The entrance to the theater is at the point where the spiral is interrupted, a ramp that adapts to the level shift between the enclosure and the surrounding land in the Sabarmati Ashram*. Gandhi lived here from 1917 to 1930, and here the community that accompanied him in the struggle for independence took form.

The wall, varying in height and with an undulated yet forceful shape, wraps the audience and the stage of the theater, creating different, variable relationships with the surroundings – a dense, continuous vegetation that joins separate constructions – for those who move inside it. The episodes that emerge from the surface of the wall – an overhanging front, rectangular openings, the variously shaped top – establish relations with the profile of the trees, creating a solid and dynamic attunement with the outside.

Due to its design and the place where it stands, this spiral unexpected and effectively gives structure to a set of previously scattered constructions, presenting and confirming itself as the deliberate or occasional effect of a proportional measurement inserted

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The intensity of a lone wall
Camillo Magni

During the preparation of the previous issue of «Casabella», during one of the

encounters at the studio in Porto, Álvaro Siza spoke of a work of architecture that had impressed him: the small outdoor theater Jai Jagat at Ahmedabad in India, the first work by the Indo-Portuguese studio Sea-Lab founded by Anand Sonecha (1986) and Mariana Paisana (1986).

The project is located in a context of

extraordinary intensity: the Sabarmati Ashram, a space set aside for meditation, education and literacy of the

community where Gandhi lived from 1917 to 1930, now transformed into a

museum and a holy place for the entire nation.

The spirit of Gandhi looms over all.

Porto, 6 March 2019

Porto, 6 March 2019

* Sabarmati Ashram (from the Sanskrit

As'rama, place of meditation), known as Gandhi Ashram, was the base from which Gandhi led the Dandi march in 1930. It includes various constructions and the ashram's museum, the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, built by Charles Correa starting in 1958.

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11 Nov 79 – Opening of the theater in Venice for the Biennale
Aldo Rossi Casabella

The theater in Venice as a space of imagination, and to imagination in urban interventions. Architecture achieves its relationship with reality above all by defining itself as architecture to the point of being an object. These Venetian monuments are to a great extent Venice, they are the use of beauty and fantasy. All that which is not used is somehow sad, useless, superfluous. The quotation is from Saverio Vertone in "Com'è bella la città."

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The life of the Teatro del Mondo was documented, from the start of its construction, by Antonio Martinelli. His photographs narrate the way it took

The opposite was the interior, with

amidst the volumes and open spaces. The space defined by the spiral transmits a fluid availability towards what moves and is transformed. At the same time, it is a container and a place of mobilization, point of encounter and place of departure.

A place where History and Future meet, present as if it was built long ago, or as if it had been silently announced.

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the Shakespearean analogy and that of the anatomical theater, it appeared perfectly rational, logical, ready and open to action.

It was already theater without a specific performance, it was unfinished in the time of something that is left or overlooked out of lack of possibility or creative will or affection.

It was above all an empty theater, and I measured its acoustics not with the voice but with the intelligence or the fantasy of intelligence.

To what could I be more closely tied than to that which was spectacle, when the central space was occupied by the antique pink harpsichord that with its first sounds and the testing of the lights identified with what I called the prestige of the theater? And this work was the tribute to the great builders, builders of ships, of towers, of war machines or theatrical machines. It was still the *fabbrica*...

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Aldo Rossi

The theater in Venice as a space of imagination, and to imagination in urban interventions. Architecture achieves its relationship with reality above all by defining itself as architecture to the point of being an object. These Venetian monuments are to a great extent Venice, they are the use of beauty and fantasy. All that which is not used is somehow sad, useless, superfluous. The quotation is from Saverio Vertone in "Com'è bella la città."

The theater has been built for the centenary of the construction of the Ashram and is the latest portion of a complex system of constructions for learning and the growth "of the body, mind and spirit of men and children" (Gandhi).

To describe this project, we thought it would be meaningful to ask Siza himself to share his perspective with us, and to speak –through the following text– about the force and intensity of this work of architecture.

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The effect of proportional measurement
Álvaro Siza

Anand Sonecha recently came to visit me. We talked about Doshi, whom I met in Philadelphia and admire very much, with whom he studied and worked for five years.

Sonecha showed me something of his work, photographs and some handsome drawings.

I was deeply impressed by the outdoor theater he made in Ahmedabad: an enclosure bordered by a white spiral wall. The entrance to the theater is at the point where the spiral is interrupted, a ramp that adapts to the level shift between the enclosure and the surrounding land in the Sabarmati Ashram*. Gandhi lived here from 1917 to 1930, and here



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