



venustas / architecture / market / democracy

**European Symposium
on Research in Architecture
and Urban Design**
5th edition

Naples, June 2010

Eurau'10 Naples, June 2010

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Venustas

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call for paper

SUBJECT OF SYMPOSIUM

The 5th edition of EURAU 10 *European symposium on research in architecture and urban design-on Venustas/architecture/ market/democracy* has been organized by the Faculty of Architecture of the University "Federico II" of Naples in collaboration with the First Faculty of Architecture of the Polytechnic in Turin, the ENHSA net of European Schools of Architecture and those institutions that participated in the previous editions: the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Marseilles (ENSA), (2004 edition) on the topic "doctoral studies"; the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et Paysage del Lille (2005 edition) on the topic " large scale"; the association des Institus Supérieurs des Cités de Bruxelles-Lièges-Mons (IESA) (2006 edition) on the topic "cultural heritage", the Escuela Tecnica Superior de Arquitectura de la Universidad Politecnica de Madrid (ETSAM) (2008 edition) on the topic "cultural landscape".

The aim of the initiative is to encourage the debate among researchers that investigate on architecture and the city within a European reality. Schools of architecture are considered the focal point for research and the comparison results from the external interlocutors participation: the professional word, the agents who take point in transforming territory and city as well as those other disciplines that merge together all contribute in bringing about such transformations.

THEME OF SYMPOSIUM

We borrowed from Vitruvio the principle of *venustas*, to question the concept of "beauty" in *architecture* and its relationships with the contemporary culture, condensed - for the synthesis required by a title – in the economical term, *market*, and in the political term, *democracy*.

In the 1st century B.C., Vitruvius wrote a treatise in 10 volumes, architectural knowledge has had to come to terms with, for the last 2000 years. His idea that architecture can be defined synthetically by three governing principles *firmitas* (stability), *utilitas* (utility), and *venustas* (beauty) has been fundamental in determining the concept of architecture in western civilization, though this cultural heritage has practically been betrayed by a certain number of architectural expressions.

In the last ten years architecture has challenged the Vitruvian principles considering them obsolete and their correlation undermined. The idea of container and the difficulty in forming a commonly-shared interpretation of the role of architecture in society, renders the function of *utilitas* less burdensome; the indifference towards technical-structural choices as well as the inadequacy of the idea of stability and durability makes the principle of *firmitas* seem merely rhetorical; the critical condition the idea of style has been dragged into, and the development of a civilization of images have raised doubts on the validity of the idea of *venustas* related to the field of architecture, in other words, the idea of beauty closely linked to the idea of utility and construction. Taking it for granted that this process has died away, is it still possible to talk about architecture for those works that have entrusted their formal and social values solely to images?

Having loosened those knots that have kept the idea of beauty closely tied to the concrete aspects of this subject, its implications and evaluations, and to the idea of an architectural space differentiated according to its individual, collective and public uses and functions, the issue related to *venustas* places architecture in an open and overcrowded field. As with many other products of contemporary civilization even architecture is often expected to be only somewhat beautiful: the question is what kind of beauty and above all who deems it to be so? How does architecture relate beauty with quality? And who is able today to establish or merely suggest the diverse and manifold canons of beauty?

To be corrupted by the market can be dangerous for this kind of "product" that has so far been outstandingly resourceful in avoiding being transformed into globalized merchandize and, perhaps, it is for this reason that it has been relegated at the utmost limits of the contemporary economic

system. After all, the market seems to be more interested in an emerging production than in mass production. It considers architecture an “event”, a display of wonder that is able to spur on even a large scale economy, that type of architecture created by an architect-artist, who is a significant member of that star-system, always on the look-out to collect ‘public’ consent rather than to satisfy real ‘users’. Could it be that taking the lead from the theme of *venustas* the market would be capable of participating in construing the idea of a discursive architecture, the so-called architecture of democracy?

As far as democracy is concerned: not a subject, but a condition, an objectively positive one among the existing few, where some people like to tread and others would like to join in. Democracy is served by a network system, a new form of communication that allows everyone to express their own opinion (and might even allow anybody to form one). Everyone has a firsthand knowledge of architecture, at least because they dwell in it, therefore architecture can be one of the most accomplished forms of democracy. But how will the complex theme of quality develop in this new dimension of *venustas*?

MAIN TOPIC SESSIONS

Eurau refers to researchers, professors, architects and agents who take point in transforming territory and city but it pertains to all the academics who study the architecture and the city, too.

Eurau' 10 will take place from 23rd - 26th of June 2010 and will be organized in parallel sessions dedicated to the three main topics presented: *Designing venustas- Communicating venustas- Constructing venustas*.

The scientific committee will dedicate the three days of the congress discussing the papers submitted.

T1. *Designing venustas*

Many different meanings have been attributed to the word *venustas* over the centuries but recently it has been identified simply with the idea of beauty. However, if *venustas* were merely 'beauty', could we think of "beauty" as being inherent in architecture? In this period of market economy and modern democracy have we chosen the best definition for *venustas* in architecture? Aren't there any more appropriate terms that could better describe such a quality in architecture? But, then, the question arises whether beauty is still a necessity for architecture today and whether it still serves the purpose of explaining the relationship between humanity, the world and time?

T2. *Communicating venustas*

To communicate means to educate and inform, two key-words for today's market and democracy. If the word *venustas* today is related to those seductive qualities that the idea of beauty arouses, how are we to relate the principle of necessity to 'beauty' or quality to 'beauty'?

Should this task be left in the hands of some 'master' or should we find a solution in 'schools' where knowledge flourishes?

Anyway, how can we tally creativity with rules and discipline with imagination?

Or, in this network age, do we have ready at hand other means and places where it would be possible to communicate so many different definitions of beauty?

T3. *Constructing venustas*

From the ethical, social, civil, political claim of architecture to the shaping of the idea of *venustas*.

A vision from the top versus a vision from the bottom.

To think about architecture today as a projection of people's desires means to reshape the idea of beauty expanding it into something that invests the nature of those processes involved in the building up of architecture and landscape. It means redefining the relationship between demand and reply.

However, how does one construct the idea of beauty? how do we go about evaluating "beauty"? who is able to determine the qualities of 'beauty' and what canons will he turn to in order to formulate his opinions? finally, how are we to find the right method to understand, interpret and define *venustas* today?

PRESENTATION AND SELECTION OF PAPERS SUBMITTED

The organizing committee has chosen the scientific article and the poster as the two formats acceptable for any type of communication. the selection will be based on an abstract presented by the authors. the abstracts must contain max 800 words and can be sent to the eurau'10 administrative office till 30th november 2009 (only word document by email). The abstracts can be written in italian, french or english. submissions should include:

- a) main topic sessions (t1, t2 or t3)-
- b) author's name and surname- -
- c) title of the paper(written in small letters, max 30 words).
(e.g.: t1-rossi-antonio-rethinking beauty.)

Accepted contributions will be notified to the authors within 20th January 2010 together with the format chosen for their articles (scientific paper, poster or both).

scientific articles must contain max 3500 words and shall be sent to the following email address: segreteria@eurau10.it before 20th march 2010. they can be written in italian, french or english.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Instructions for drafting abstracts and scientific articles can be downloaded from the congress site: <http://www.eurau10.it>

PUBLICATION OF THE CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS

Papers selected by the scientific committee will be published as congress proceedings and can be found on the website starting from April 2010 and can be downloaded.

These papers will then be published in the congress proceedings (with an isbn code no.) and will be sent to all participants.

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

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CONGRESS MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Registration membership fee is euro 250. This includes free access to all the activities illustrated in the programme (sessions, meetings, events): lunches, coffee-break, congress gadgets, pre-acts and the final publication of the acts of the congress.

The congress registration office will accept a maximum of 250 members.

Registration starts on 21th January right through to 31st may 2010.

For all registrations taking place within 28th february 2010 registration fees will be cut down to euro 200.

Exceptionally low congress membership fee for students is euro 100.

Registration must be effected via fax in accordance with the rules on the website <http://www.eurau10.it>