

FLORENCE

Studio Sergison
Spring Semester 2022

The city as museum



Contents

5	Introduction
6	Theme: the city as museum
10	Florence: the structure of the ancient city
18	Project sites
22	First exercise: survey
24	Case studies
32	Second exercise: building concept
36	Third exercise: room study
40	Fourth exercise: project
42	Fifth exercise: final drawings
44	Material for final review
46	Programme: Spring Semester 2022
48	Reading list
49	References
50	Contacts

Florence from Ponte San Nicolò

Introduction



Working in pairs, students will be required to design a public building that will serve as a cultural centre on a site in Florence. At the beginning of the semester, a survey of exemplary buildings will be undertaken in order to develop an understanding of some of the most important buildings in the history of the city. While all the case studies selected are seminal buildings, the list could be much longer.

A study trip to Florence is planned to visit the proposed project sites and develop an understanding of the urban character of the city and explore some of its most significant buildings. A number of lectures and presentations will be organized during the semester to support and inform students following the course.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the study of the building's image and representational character and on an exploration of atmosphere and the way this contributes to the architectural character of the building. This will require the building of large and accurate models, as well three-dimensional drawings.

Loggia of Palazzo
Davanzati and view of the
Cathedral, Florence.
Alinari Archive, 1910.

Florence is home to a collection of buildings whose contribution to western architectural culture is of great significance. Initially built to serve the needs of clients and project their standing in society, in time, these buildings have been much studied, copied and Reinterpreted since – so much so that when we look at them today, they might not seem so original because they have been so extensively imitated.

We know that Florence emerged as a powerful city state in the XIV and XV century. Founded in Roman times, the city grew to be one of the financially dominant cities in Italy following the growth of the merchant classes and the expansion of textile production which generated great wealth and gave rise to international finance. The system of double entry book-keeping was invented in Florence.

In 1250, power was seized by the *governo del primo popolo* – merchants, craftsmen, bankers and magistrates rather than ‘the people’ in a modern sense – and a *Capitano del Popolo* is elected to counter the political power of the aristocracy. A number of families who had accumulated great wealth now held considerable power and had the means to commission buildings that would represent their position. They were careful to avoid excessive ostentation, commissioning the most talented architects of the time. They were, in this sense, cultivated clients.

While churches and other public building made a significant contribution to architecture culture, the *palazzi* they commissioned were leading examples of a new form of domestic architecture related to ancient Roman models with shops and warehouses on the ground floor and accommodation above. The Florentine *palazzi* emerged as a new urban building type that was refined and improved upon by exceptional architects between the end of the XIV century and end of the XV century by learning from and improving a building type, which would be copied widely throughout Italy and beyond.

We are interested in learning from the architecture of Florence, not as historians but as designers and architects. The building programme we will explore this semester is a museum or cultural centre to be built on one of several sites. Proposals should consider how the architecture of this building can express the architectural culture of the city in meaningful contemporary ways. This requires interpretation rather than copy or pastiche.

Classical architecture is the dominant canon in western architectural history and, which for centuries offered guidelines on how to practice architecture, until international modernism challenged its universal dominance. In more recent times there have been moments when classical architecture has been reappraised and advocated, however patchy and unconvincing the results. In general, such work is described as Postmodern and some see it a cynical exploitation of the image of classicism. Classical architecture has also been used to bolster the prestige of totalitarian regimes, and this has resulted in an understandable stigma.

These comments are intended as a cautionary note against the risks associated with our task for this semester: the creation of a building that helps guide and orientate visitors to understand the architectural culture of this great Italian city through an interpretation of its architecture.

Staircase of the Arnolfo Tower at Palazzo Vecchio and view of the Cathedral, Florence, Alinari Archive, 1900-05.

pp. 8-9 The park of Villa Fabbricotti in Florence, Alinari Archive, 1920-1930,





Centuriation (from the Latin *centuriatio*) or the Roman grid method of land measurement determined the landscape of various settlements in Italy, Florence among them.

In Florence, however, the orientation of the axes of the centuriation system did not coincide with the four cardinal points but followed the orographic characteristics of the Florentine plain, taking into account the lie of the land and the flow of rainwater along drainage channels.

This was an important tool for reconstructing the history of the landscape of many former villages of the Roman Empire. In Florence, traces of centuriation are still evident, as the streets in the periphery are rotated in relation to those within the walls. In the plain that stretches to Prato and Sesto traces of the agricultural centuriation are still identifiable in the street network.

Although the orientation of the city and the centuriation grid did not coincide, the central point of the centuriation has been identified at the intersection of the *decumanus maximus* and the *cardo maximus* of the Roman settlement, now Via Strozzi, Via Speziali and Via del Corso in the city centre.

At this exact point, the colony was founded in 59 BCE during the spring period of the *ludi floreales*, which could explain the origin of the name Florentia. The strategic location at the confluence of the Arno and Mugnone rivers allowed this new Roman settlement to flourish and rapidly develop into an important centre of trade.

When the city was founded, the first urban features to be established were the central square and the four main city gates. Subsequently houses and the Capitoline temple were built. The city walls were erected only 10 years later.

Other key infrastructures were established, including the paving, sewage network, water wells, aqueduct, baths, bridge and the port.

The settlement had the key characteristics of a Roman colony; a rectangular plan defined by an 1800-metre perimeter wall interrupted by cylindrical defensive towers aligned with the *cardo* and *decumanus* which joined the 4 gates and intersected at Piazza della Repubblica, the former central Piazza, the *forum urbis*.

In the II century CE Florence already had about 10,000 inhabitants. With the barbarian invasions after the fall of the Western Roman Empire the city underwent a major crisis; in the VI century the population was reduced to less than 1,000 inhabitants. As a result of this shrinking of the city, a second wall was built, the so-called Byzantine wall, which encloses a smaller area than the Roman wall.

During the Carolingian period (from the end of VII to the IX century) the demographic crisis was finally reversed, and the city population returned to about 5000 inhabitants. Migration from rural areas resulted in significant population growth, especially from nearby cities like Fiesole. In 854 Fiesole and Florence merged, making Florence the largest urban centre in Tuscany with the most important contado (the region surrounding the city) extending from the Apennines to Siena and from Pistoia to Arezzo.

The social structure that emerged came to characterise Tuscany in the centuries that followed, i.e. the opposition between *castelli*, the centres of economic and social activity, and *plebato*, the religious and administrative units governed by the church.

Between the end of the IX century and the beginning of the X century a third city wall was erected to defend the city from the threat of Hungarian invasions. This wall extended to the banks of the Arno for the first time although the Battistero, S.Reparata church and the Palazzo Vescovile remained outside its perimeter. Close to these buildings was the Margrave palace with the city's Court of Justice, so that in case of an uprising of the people the Margrave could easily escape, which explains why this whole area was left beyond the walls.

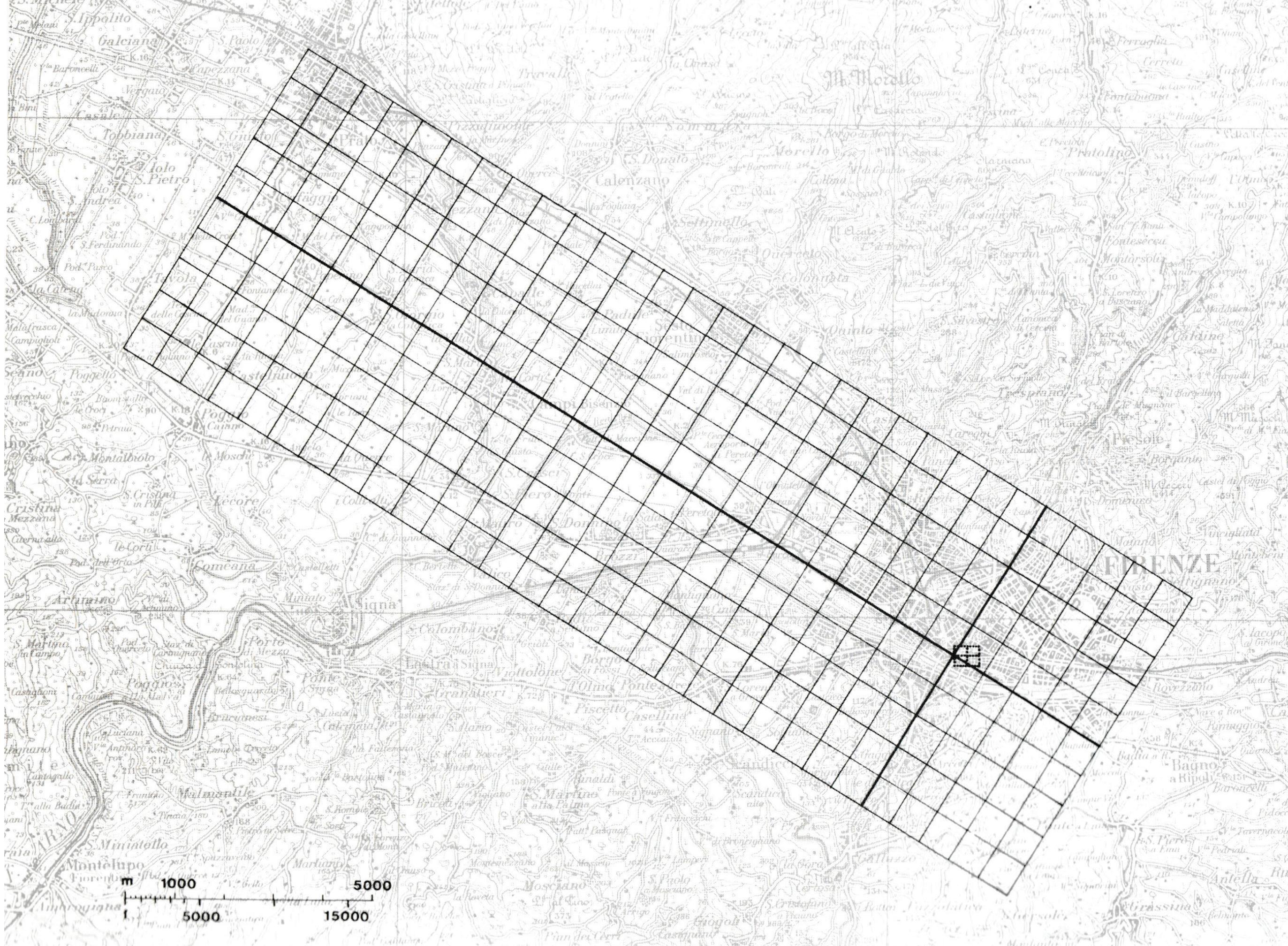
Florence's decisive participation in the Church reform movement made it one of the main centres of Christendom between 1035 and 1065, and consequently an important political centre. This revival was marked by the construction of new public buildings, hospitals, religious buildings and commercial structures. By the mid XI century the city's population had grown to approximately 20,000.

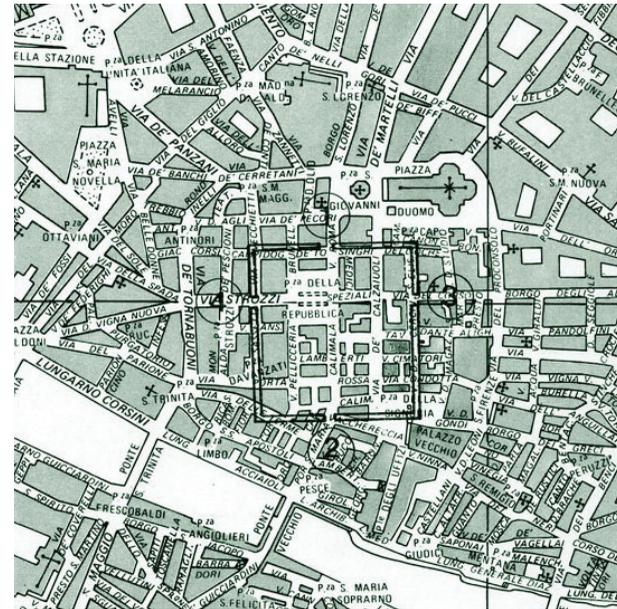
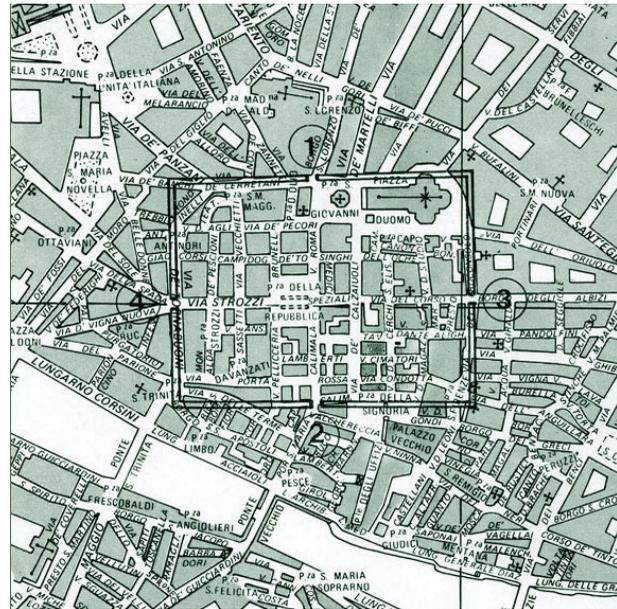
Fearing an attack from Henry IV, Countess Matilde promoted the construction of a fourth ring of walls that began in 1078, when the capital of the Duchy of Tuscany had moved from Lucca to Florence. The new walls also included Piazza del Duomo, but not the neighbourhoods on the south bank of the river. This wall was often referred to as the *cerchia antica* (the ancient walls) by Dante, even though it was actually the fourth.

Between 1173 and 1175, the walls were extended once more, as they were no longer able to contain the ever-growing city: the fifth ring of walls expanded to include the Oltrarno (the area on the south bank of the Arno), where settlements had formed around the churches of San Felice, San Jacopo in Soprano and Santa Felicita.

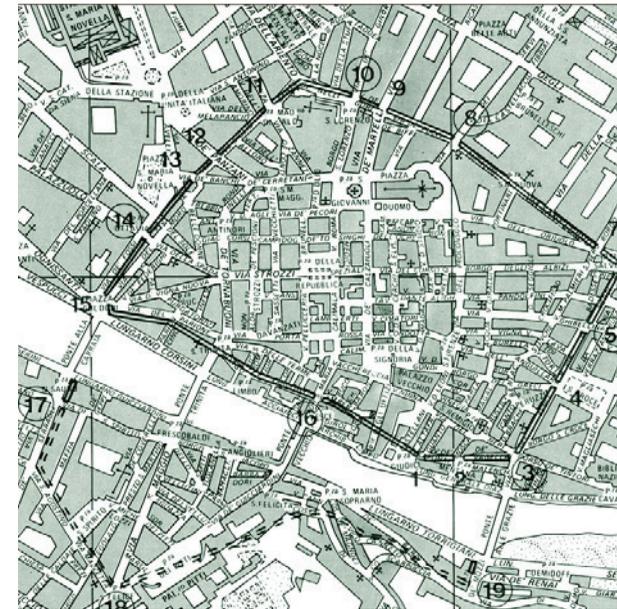
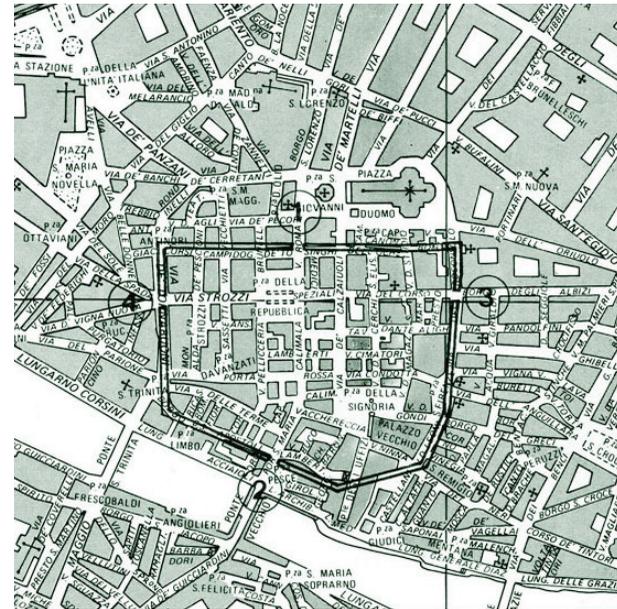
Nevertheless, this was not enough to contain the constant urban growth, and in 1284 a further city wall was erected, almost eight times longer than the previous one.

The last two decades of the XIII century mark the culmination of the economic and demographic expansion of Florence. The '*governo del secondo popolo*', like that of the first but to an even greater extent, undertook further major public works between 1250 and 1260. These imposing projects established an essentially new urban structure, on which all the interventions of the following centuries would be based.





1 2



3 4

1
City walls, 1 century BCE
2000 - 2500 inhabitants

2
City walls, 539
1000 inhabitants

3
City walls, 825
4000 - 5000 inhabitants

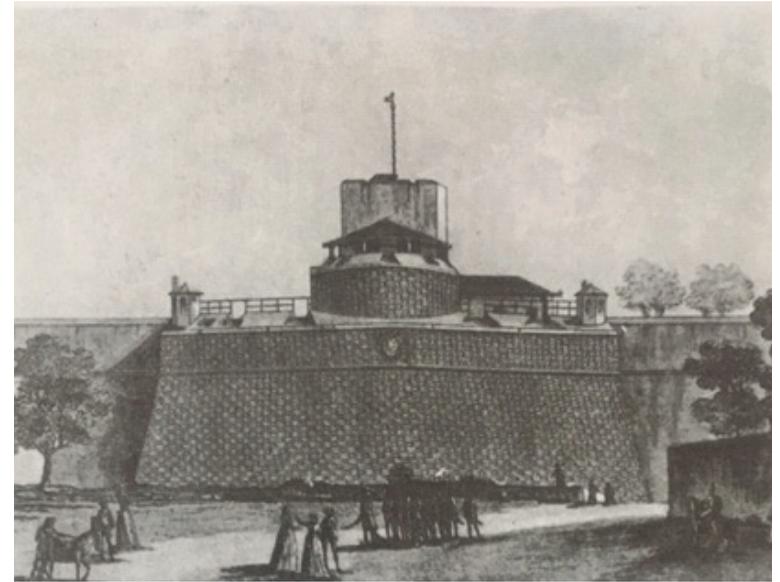
4
City walls, 1172
15000 - 20000 inhabitants



1



2
Prato city walls
XII century



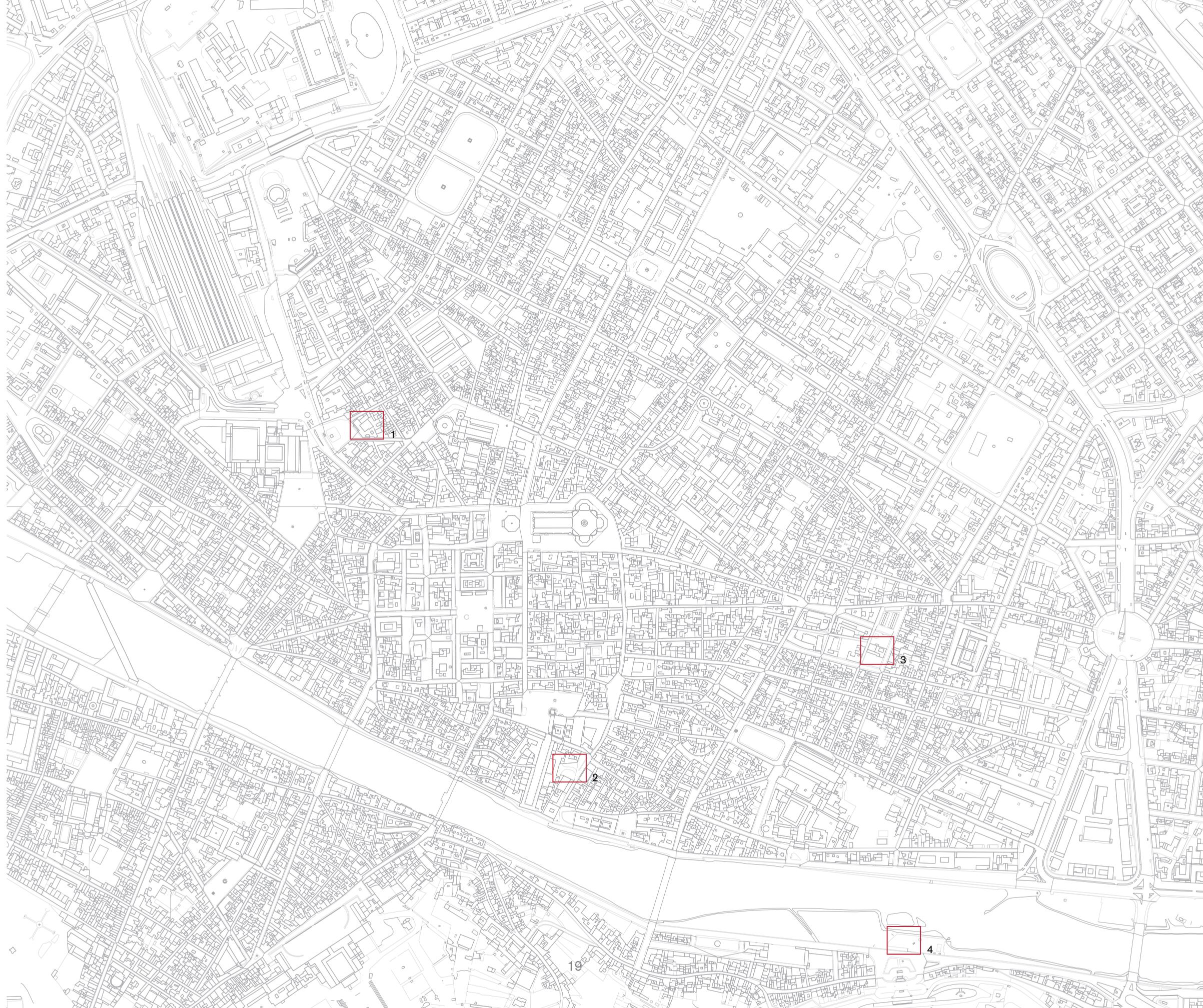
3



4
The Fortress of Saint
John the Baptist
Antonio da Sangallo the
Younger
XVI century

Project sites

- 1
Piazza dell'Unità Italiana
- 2
Piazza del Grano
- 3
Parco di Piazza dei Ciompi
- 4
Piazza Giuseppe Poggi



Project sites



1 2



4



5



3



6 7

1
Site 1 from Piazza
della Stazione

2
Site 1 from Piazza dell'Unità
Italiana

3
Site 2 from Via dei Leoni

4
Site 3, from the North

5
Site 3, from the South

6
Site 4 from Lungarno Serristori

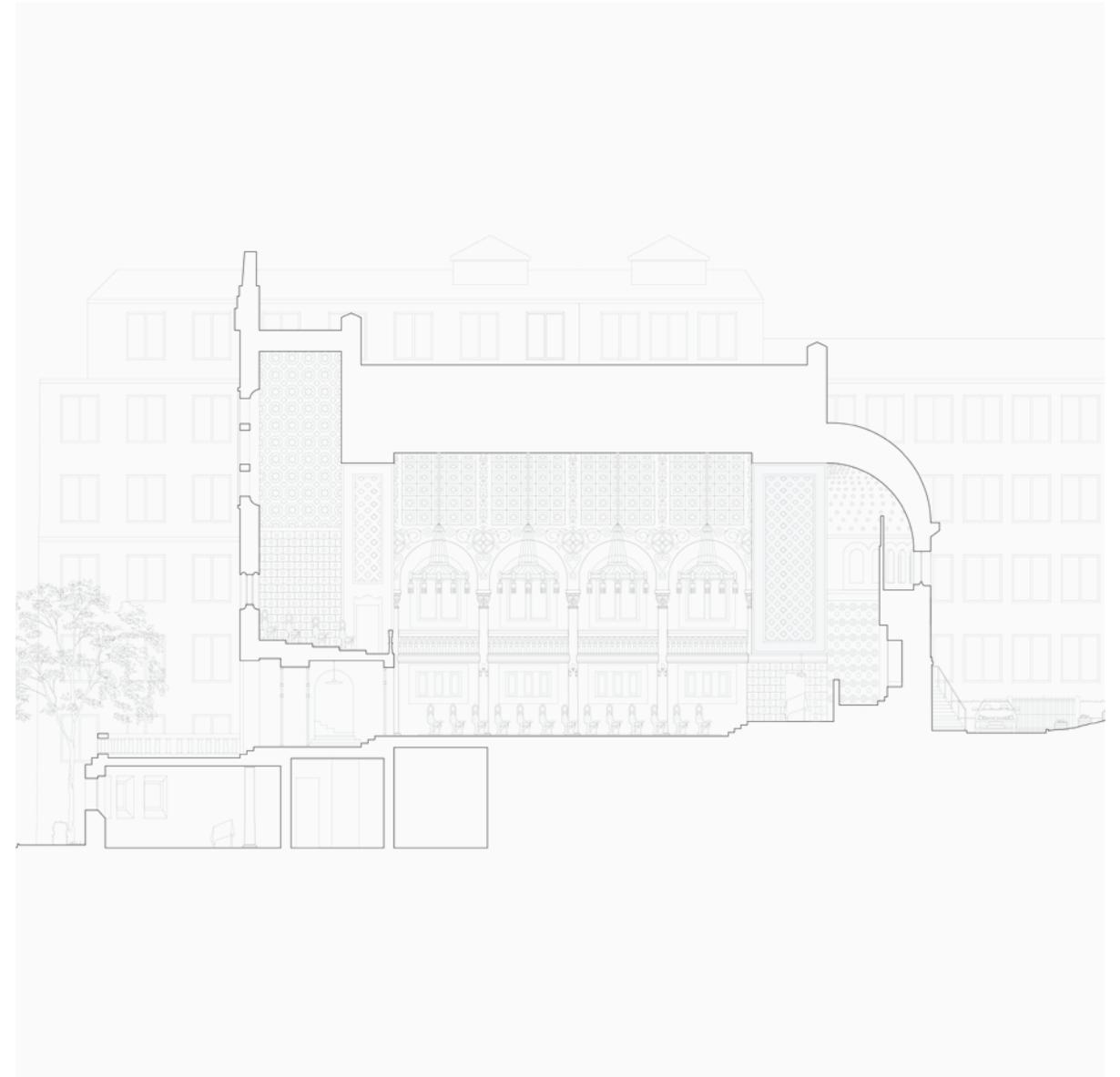
7
Site 4 from the North bank of the
river Arno

We hold the position that invention is a necessary ambition in architecture, but it rarely emerges by spontaneous intuition. An architect can only hope to make a truly unique proposal after many years of study and reflection. Indeed, it is debatable whether true originality is achievable. To help you understand the task you are attending to this semester, we would like you to undertake a survey of one seminal building in Florence. We believe that surveying existing buildings helps develop a deeper understanding of its qualities, a useful corrective to the belief that it is possible to come up with entirely original solutions.

The information recorded in your survey will be drawn upon and referred to throughout the semester and will inform your subsequent work. You should draw the facade and understand the way it is organised. You will be expected to describe it clearly and analytically, employing diagrams where necessary. You should concentrate on understanding the quality and arrangement of the facade by drawing a measured survey of the building. This will require you to look very carefully at it, make sketches and take photographs as a way of recording their condition.

We also ask you to make a precise photographic portrait that conveys the atmosphere of the building, its urban context and the qualities you find in the main interior space. An introduction will be offered to assist you in understanding this exercise.

Sandro Hernández Rosales and
Luca Sonzogni
Autumn semester 2021





1
Casa INA
Giovanni Michelucci, 1955-58
Via dello Sprone



12



3



4
Palazzo Bartolini-Salimbeni
Baccio d'Agnolo, 1520-23
Piazza Santa Trinita

5
Basilica della Santissima Annunziata
Facade added by Giovanni Battista Caccini
1601
Piazza della Santissima Annunziata

6
Palazzo Canacci-Giandonati
XV century
Piazza di Parte Guelfa

7
Palazzo Cocchi-Serristori
Baccio d'Agnolo, 1485-90
Piazza di Santa Croce



4 5



6 7



8
Palazzo dei Mozzi
1260-73
Piazza dei Mozzi



9
Loggia dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti
Filippo Brunelleschi, 1419-27
Piazza Santissima Annunziata

89



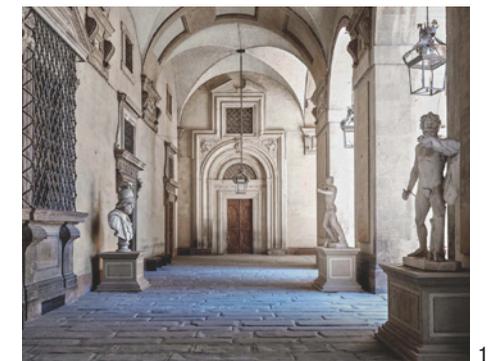
10
San Miniato al Monte
1060-1207
Via delle Poste Sante 34

11
Palazzo Davanzati
XIV century
Via Rossa

12
Courtyard of Palazzo Pitti
Bartolomeo Ammannati, 1560
Piazza Pitti



10



11 12



13



13
Palazzo Guadagni
attr. Baccio d'Agnolo and Simone del Pollaiolo
1502-06
Piazza Santo Spirito, 9



14 15

14
Palazzo Giuntini
XIX century
Piazza Ognissanti 1

15
Loggiato dei Servi.
Antonio da Sangallo il Vecchio and Baccio
d'Agnolo, 1515-25
Piazza Santissima Annunziata



16
Palazzo Medici Riccardi
Michelozzo di Bartolomeo, 1444-1484
Via Camillo Cavour, 3

17
Courtyard of Palazzo Ridolfi Zanchini
Santi di Tito and Baccio d'Agnolo, 1583
Via Maggio

18
Palazzo Rucellai
Leon Battista Alberti, 1446-51
Piazza dei Rucellai



16 17



18



19 20

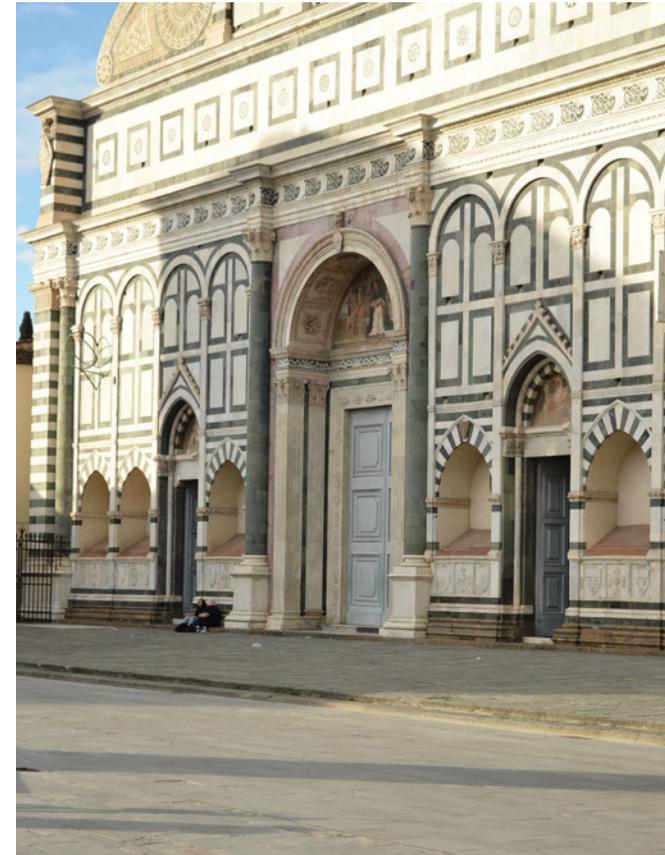
19
Palazzo Strozzi
attr. Benedetto da Maiano, 1489-1538
Piazza Strozzi

20
Palazzo Uguccioni
1550-59
Piazza della Signoria, 7

21
Basilica di Santa Croce
Arnolfo di Cambio, 1385
Piazza di Santa Croce



21



22 23

22
Santa Maria Novella
Facade by Leon Battista Alberti, 1456-70
Piazza Santa Maria Novella

23
Uffizi Gallery
Giorgio Vasari, 1565
Piazzale degli Uffizi, 6

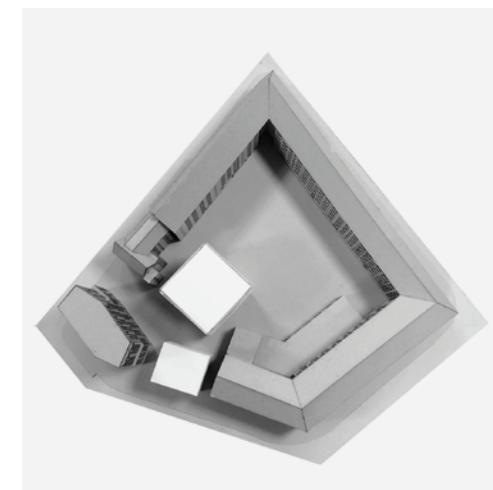
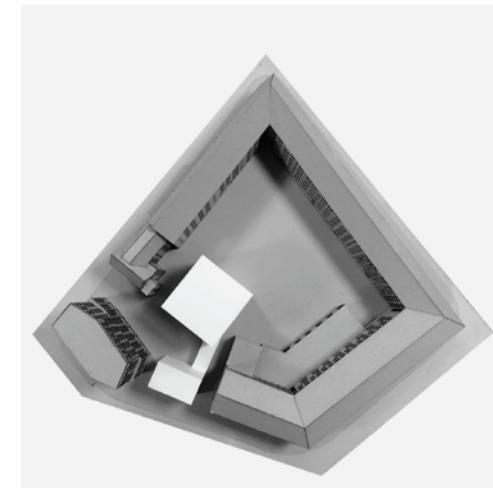
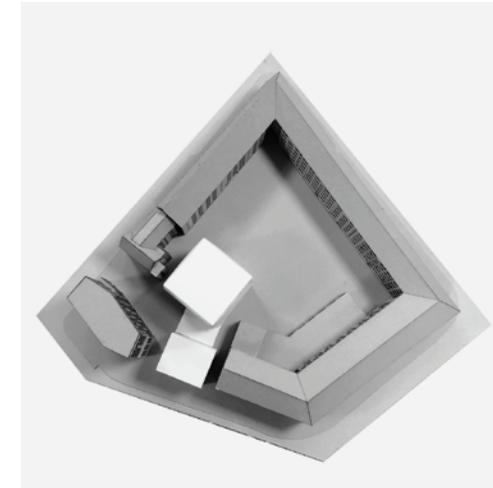
Second exercise: building concept

All students working on the same site are required to produce a 1:200 model and the wider surrounding area as a group project. This requires both accuracy and careful coordination. The model produced should then be used as a tool to help develop a concept for your own project.

You should consider the scale of the building, the way it accommodates the programme and the relationship it establishes with neighbouring buildings and the surrounding landscape. While priority should be given to an extensive exploration of different massing possibilities, you will be expected to produce drawings in the form of sketches, plans, sections and elevations. A lecture will be given at this stage in the semester to broaden your understanding of the themes and issues we are inviting you to consider.

Anna Paschetto and Leone Nicolis
di Robilant
Autumn semester 2021

pp. 34-35
Dawid Roszkowski, Dong Oh and
Alejandro Colomina
Autumn semester 2021





With the knowledge you should now have developed of your project, you will be asked to build a model of a room at 1:50 / 1:25 that accurately holds the atmosphere you want it to convey.

Representing a room may require you to indicate its relationship with neighbouring rooms, or the view out to the city. You are expected to make a number of models to explore ideas for this single space. The final version should then be photographed carefully. This is a key aspect of the work you will produce this semester. An introductory lecture will be offered on this aspect of your work.

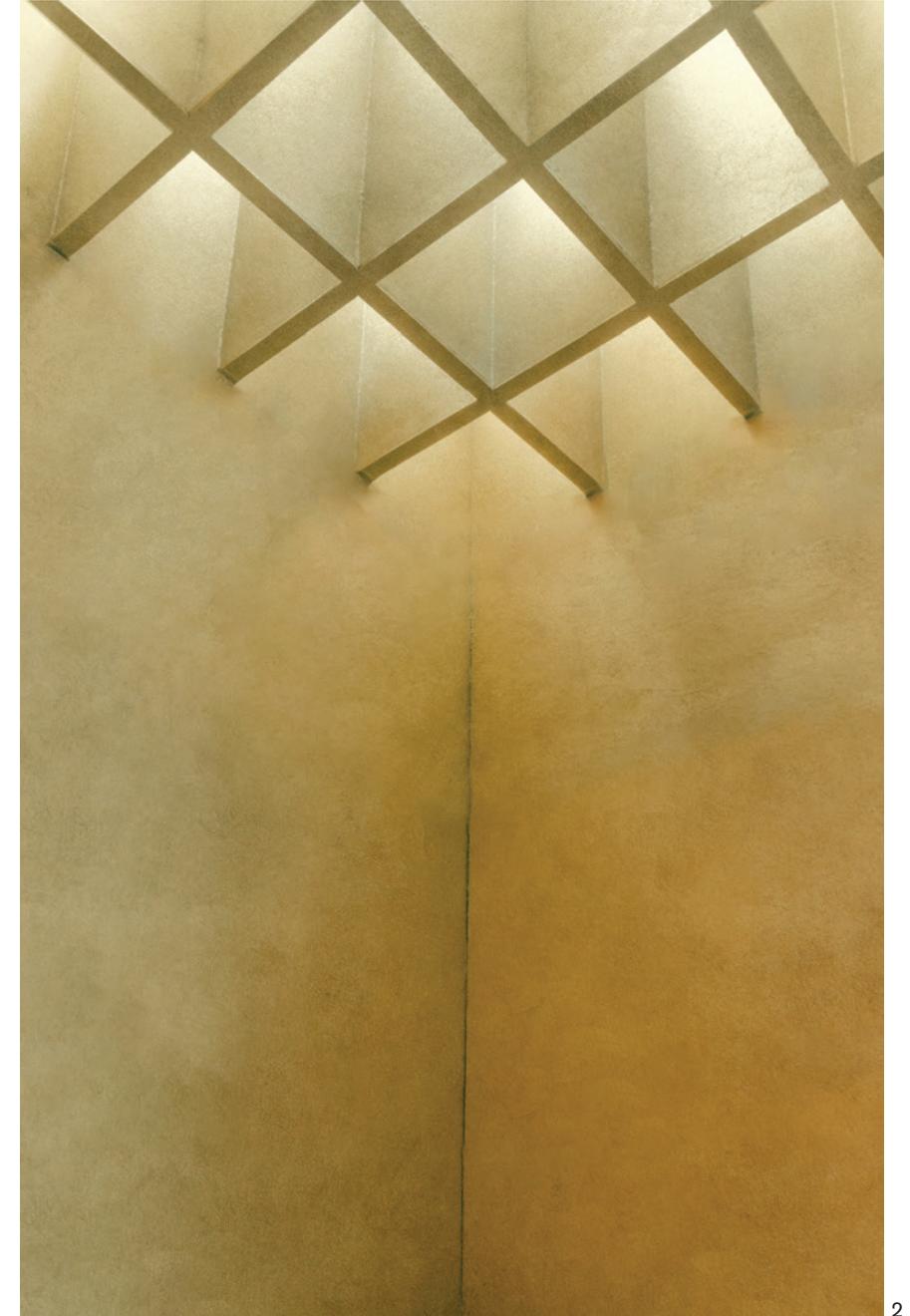
Anna Paschetto e Leone Nicolis
di Robilant
Autumn semester 2021





1

1-2
Dawid Roszkowski, Dong Oh and
Alejandro Colomina
Autumn semester 2021



2

This exercise is intended to build upon the understanding you have begun to develop during the previous stage of your work to refine your project further. The focus will be on plastic qualities: you are asked to produce study models at a scale of 1:100 and 1:50. These will allow you to consider your project in relation to its wider context. The base model should be sufficiently detailed and include enough of the neighbouring buildings to enable you to understand the immediate relationship your project has to its surroundings.

As in the previous exercise, while priority should be given to the making of models that explore ideas about the form, volume, elevation and internal organisation of the building, the process should be supported by drawings.

Elisa Monti and Tu Zhouyi
Autumn semester 2021



At this stage in the development of your project you will be asked to consider the internal organisation of the building at a larger scale. The organisation of the plans and sections should be drawn and refined through a reflective and critical process.

The choices you make about how to produce drawings and their representational character should be carefully considered.

A final set of drawings should be submitted two weeks before the final reviews to give you sufficient time to produce the final model. A lecture on ways of drawing will be offered to support your work.

Lucas Darbellay and Atsushi Onoe
Autumn semester 2021



The final review will consider all the components of the work produced during the semester, including a large-scale model of your project produced using carefully selected materials. You should also prepare a presentation of your project as a .pdf file.

It is important that you are able to describe the development of your work accurately and precisely and that you include models of your final project at scale 1:200 and 1:50 or 1:20, an image of the room you have chosen and a revised version of the image you made earlier in the semester. You also need to produce drawings at an appropriate scale in plan, section and elevation.



Final reviews
Autumn semester 2021

Date	Event	Details	Assignments
24 February	Studio briefing	Jonathan Sergison (JS) presents studio and Spring semester brief Lecture by JS 'The city as museum'. Lecture by Cristina Roiz (CR) 'How to survey a building'	Survey photographs and drawings
25 February	Trip to Florence	Trip to allocated project sites Survey studies	Survey photographs and drawings
3-4 March	Review	Review of survey drawings Recorded lecture by Peter Märkli 'On reference'	1:200 site model Initial ideas for the project
10-11 March	Tutorials	Review of initial ideas for project strategy. Lecture by Andri Gerber 'The Urban History of Florence'	1:200 model studies Initial ideas for the project
17-18 March	Review	Review of initial ideas for project strategy. Lecture by CR and Flavia Saggese (FS): 'Image and representation'	Room study 1:50 model
24-25 March	Review	Review of projects Lecture by JS 'The palazzo type'	Room study 1:50 model
31 March -1 April	Tutorials	Review of projects	1:200 model studies, 1:100 Plans, sections and elevations 1:50 room studies
7th April	Intermediate review	Project reviews with guest critics	Pdf presentation Ideas for a project strategy 1:200 site model 1:100 plans, sections, elevations Perspectives 1:50 model
14-15 April	Tutorials	Review of projects	1:100 plans, sections, elevations 1:50 models
21-22 April	Easter break		

Date	Event	Details	Assignments
28-29 April	Review	Review of projects	1:100 plans, sections, elevations 1:50 models
5-6 May	Tutorials	Revision of final drawings	1:100 plans, sections, elevations
12-13 May	Tutorials	Submission of final drawings	Images and final models
20-21 May	Tutorials	Review of images	Images and final models
28-29 May	Tutorials	Prepare presentation	Prepare presentation
2nd June	Final review	Project reviews with guest critics	Pdf presentation 1:200 site model 1:200 situation plan (roof plan) Models to an agreed size 1:100 plans, sections and facades Interior and exterior perspectives

Alessandro Rinaldi, R. Manetti, M.C. Pozzana
Sul limitare della città: storia e vita delle mura urbane a Firenze tra Seicento e Ottocento
 Edifir, Pisa, 2008

Andrew Hopkins
Italian Architecture from Michelangelo to Borromini
 Thames & Hudson, London, 2002

Antonella Huber
Il museo italiano
 Lybra immagine, Milan, 1960

Augusto Rossa
I musei e gli allestimenti di Franco Albini
 Electa, Florence, 2005

Emiliano Scamporrè
Firenze, archeologia di una città (secoli I a.C – XIII d.C.)
 Firenze University Press, Florence, 2010

Giovanni Fannelli
Firenze architettura e città
 Mandragora, Florence, 2002.

Henry Millon
Italian Renaissance Architecture: From Brunelleschi to Michelangelo
 Thames & Hudson, London, 1996

Renzo Manetti, M.C. Pozzana,
Firenze: le porte dell'ultima cerchia di mura
 Clusf, Florence, 1979

Renzo Manetti
Le città del Poggi, in Giuseppe Poggi e Firenze. Disegni di architetture e città
 Alinea, Florence, 1989, pp. 33-56

Roberto Aloï
Esposizioni - Architettura Allestimenti
 Ulrico Hoepli Editore, Milan, 1960

Roberto Aloï
Musei - Architettura e Tecnica.
 Ulrico Hoepli Editore, Milan, 1960

Peter Murray
The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance
 Schocken Books, New York, 1997

Aldo Rossi
L'architettura della città
 Marsilio, Padova, 1966

Roger Diener, Martin Steinmann
Das Haus und die Stadt / The House and the City
 Diener & Diener, Städtebauliche Arbeiten/Urban Studies
 Birkhäuser, Basel, 1995

Dichte / Density
 Archithese, Niggli Verlag, Zürich, 2011

Martin Steinmann
Forme forte
 Birkhäuser 2003

Joseph Rykwert
The Seduction of Place: the City in the Twenty-first Century
 Weidenfeld & Nicholson, New York, 2000

Jonathan Sergison and Stephen Bates
Papers 3
 Quart Verlag, Luzern, 2016

Critical Regionalism: modern architecture and cultural identity
 Kenneth Frampton in: *Modern architecture. A critical history*
 Thames & Hudson (1980) 2007

Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani
Die Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert. Visionen, Entwürfe, Gebautes
 Wagenbach Verlag, Berlin, 2010

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