



ANDREA
PALLADIO
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PALLADIO 1508-2008: THE EXHIBITION

Andrea Palladio was born in Padua on St Andrew's Day, 30 November, 1508.

To celebrate this quincentenary, the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, Vicenza and the Royal Academy of Arts, London, with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), are mounting a major exhibition. It will open in Vicenza, (palazzo Barbaran da Porto, 20 September 2008 – 6 January 2009), it will then move to London (Royal Academy of Arts, 31 January – 13 April 2009) and will close in the United States of America in Autumn 2009.

This exhibition will seek to use both traditional and innovative media through which to present the full range of the work of this exceptional architect and his legacy.

It will place Palladio within his contemporary historical context and will explore aspects of Palladio's work which have not been adequately presented before. It will include an extensive selection of original drawings, as well as relevant paintings, medals and coins, architectural fragments, sculpture and books and manuscripts. This material will be complemented by large-scale architectural models, video and interactive computer animation. The exhibition will present to the public a rounded, engaging and essentially new synthesis of what is known about Palladio's life, architecture and influence.

The exhibition will be structured so as to present these three aspects of the architect:

1. The life of an architect
2. Making a new architecture
3. An eternal contemporary

The life of an architect

This section will present the stages of Palladio's life chronologically, including along the time-line sub-sections illustrating general themes or particularly important episodes. Aspects of the historical and architectural context will be evoked by the works and objects exhibited when they became important for Palladio: thus his contact with Rome and modern Roman architects will appear when Palladio makes his first visits to the city.

Palladio's life is an extraordinary one: his story – which he deliberately conceals in his book – is that of an extremely gifted skilled craftsman, who managed to “self-fashion” himself so as to become an architect, intellectual, friend of the great and the learned, and - long before his death - one of the most renowned architects in Italy and in Europe.

The biographical section will trace Palladio's social and intellectual transformation with portraits, drawings, and key documents, and present material relating to those who most influenced him. It will show his relations with the nobility of Vicenza, who adopted him as “their” architect and his ever closer ties with the governing elite in Venice. Space will be given to an undiscussed aspect of Palladio: his dialogues at a distance, often mediated by his friend and patron Marcantonio Barbaro (ambassador in France, then for six years ambassador to the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul), with France, Spain, and with his great contemporary Sinan. Gulru Necipoglu has agreed to curate the important section on Palladio and Sinan.



Making a new architecture

While chronology and context will be amply respected and explored in the biographical introduction, in the section devoted to Palladio's architecture, Palladio's ideas and working procedures will be presented, not only through original drawings and objects, modern models and computer displays, but interactively, as with the Villa Game, developed for the Vicenza Villa exhibition of 2004.

This section will seek to give the public an immediate sense of why and how Palladio studied Roman antiquities and the book of Vitruvius; how he discussed with his patrons; how he designed his buildings.

Attention will also be given to the way in which Palladio invented or adapted structural solutions so as to obtain the formal and spatial effects which his architectural preferences called for, especially as regards vaults and roof trusses.

An eternal contemporary

Palladio has always been, for many successive generations of architects, a contemporary: his voice present and pertinent, not only through the original words of his book, but in translations in many languages. No other architect (till Le Corbusier) has spoken so clearly and compellingly, emphasising the unchanging truths of architecture, and effecting dramatic conversions to his way of designing, like that recorded by Giacomo Quarenghi in an autobiographical memoir.

There are so many architects and buildings influenced by Palladio, in many countries, that no general survey is likely to do justice to them all.

To present the character of Palladio's influence the exhibition will concentrate on a small selection of examples. These will show how Palladio's system of architecture was transportable to countries and contexts far from the Veneto, and easily adaptable. The ablest Palladians in fact were those who best understood that to enrich their own work with Palladio's ideas meant to extend his method, adapting it to the needs of their own place and time, rather than building precise facsimiles of his works.

The architects who will be presented here are the two great masters of the "Vicenza school": Palladio's jealous Vicentine follower, the brilliant Vincenzo Scamozzi and his inventive English admirer Inigo Jones Lord Burlington, who bought most of the surviving drawings will be presented, above all in relation to Chiswick.

A great architect whose work Burlington deplored, but who nevertheless was often inspired by Palladio, Francesco Borromini, will also be included, though to date he has never been interpreted as an imitator of Palladio.

Jefferson's house at Monticello will be presented. So too will be important masterpieces commissioned by Catherine the Great of Russia: Cameron's neo-Palladian villa at Pavlosk; Quarenghi's Academy of Sciences at St Petersburg, and his palace for Alexander at Tsarskoye Selo.

A concluding section will recall Le Corbusier's interest in Palladio and the parallels between these two founders (and propagandists for) new architectures.

Leading specialists will be responsible for these sections on Palladianism.