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# Modern Architecture and the Actualisation of History: Bruno Zevi and *Michelangiolo Architetto*

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## **Abstract**

*In 1964, Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi curated the exhibition “Michelangiolo architetto” in commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). It was accompanied by a book in which Zevi outlined a programme for understanding how Michelangelo could be an intellectual and professional model for contemporary architects negotiating the post-war inheritance of modernist functionalism. This paper considers Zevi’s argument in detail as one instance in the longer history of the reception of historical knowledge within architectural culture and its instrumental arms during the 1960s. By what process did Zevi make Michelangelo’s oeuvre available to modern architecture, and to what ends? The paper suggests that the answer to these questions can inform a study of the long-baroque, which for Zevi and his contemporaries entertained a lineage from Michelangelo to Piranesi. By focussing on this specific case in discourse with questions concerning the framing of this study on Michelangelo and his twentieth century historiography, the paper prefaces a study of the more substantial instrumentalisation of baroque architectural history that follows in the 1960s and 1970s. The paper argues that Zevi developed the terms of his history of this later development in his treatment of Michelangelo. With this wider historiographical context in mind, Zevi’s presentation of Michelangelo, as recalled here, sheds light on the limitations of critico-historical categories as well as on the projective capacity of historical*

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*“lessons”. Considering the agenda of Michelangiolo architetto, the paper positions this example within the intellectual history of twentieth century architectural culture.*

## **Introduction**

During the third quarter of the twentieth century, architectural culture in many ambits actively confronted the anti-historicist stance maintained by the orthodox lines of architecture’s modern movement. The strategies employed to this end by architects and theoreticians ranged from forms of modernist humanism to postmodern practices of historicism and eclecticism. While many aspects of this development were explicit in reacting to the modernist orthodoxy of the Congrès international d’architecture moderne and its adherents, some writers – like Rudolf Wittkower, Nikolaus Pevsner, Sigfried Giedion and Colin Rowe – sought to articulate positions on history’s relation to the present that were latent in the discourse of modernism itself. Bruno Zevi, whose writing is the subject of this paper, described this moment as a ‘period committed to the historicisation of contemporary action, that is in a promoting criticism which destroys the negative residues of the vanguard but defends its driving force.’<sup>1</sup>

Recent scholarship into the documents and writings of modern architecture’s intellectual history has demonstrated that the commonly upheld but ultimately rhetorical position of the avant-garde’s rejection of tradition in favour of function is undermined by a number of instances where specific polemics widely understood to have set aside historical precedent have in fact paid close attention both to architectural history and to the historicity of that very anti-historicist stance. The theoreticians of Soviet constructivism, reflecting the historical awareness fostered by the socio-political setting of its development, were acutely aware of the historical and historiographical status of their ideas; so too, the curriculum inherited by

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the Bauhaus paid, we now know, substantially more tribute to the history of art and architecture than has been acknowledged before the end of the last century.<sup>2</sup> We could rehearse other examples, but these two cases stand in, at least, for an emerging effort across the architectural history discipline to tease out the nuances available to the treatment of historical knowledge and its epistemology by inter-bellum architectural culture.

This strand of historical scholarship differs from the first for attempting to understand the place of history and historiography in the modern movement rather than of modern architecture in history. That these two objectives rely upon different tools and techniques can be seen in methodological shifts in architectural historiography over the last four decades. The present paper is intended as a contribution to the former of these intellectual projects, looking to a moment in which post-war modern architecture cast a shadow over the problem of architectural history education and its relation to the architect's professional and intellectual life.

Focussing on one "celebration" developed in the early 1960s by (on one hand) a group of Venetian students under the direction of Bruno Zevi and (on the other) a group of scholars centred on Rome, this paper closely considers the conceptual foundations upon which a reconstitution of the critico-historical category of baroque architecture was constructed over the course of the 1960s and 70s. The event in question formed one influential episode in the critical commemoration – in 1964 and during the years leading to this date – of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of whose death was marked with exhibitions, conferences and a heavy publication programme.<sup>3</sup> This case invokes the terms under which the architectural baroque and its historiographical limits would quickly be considered by many of the same protagonists in turning to the tercentenary of the death of Francesco Borromini (1599-67) and in treating the baroque both as a critico-historical category and as a

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field of architectural exemplification during that decade, not least in Paolo Portoghesi's widely read volume *Roma barocca* (1966).<sup>4</sup> Because of the polemical stance assumed by Zevi, the event resulted in a new view of its subject that has remained important to the present moment, either as a model for history's instrumentalisation in practice or as a warning for critical historiography.<sup>5</sup> I wish here to establish a series of questions that will ultimately lead, well beyond the conclusions of this paper, to a thoroughly theorised view of the architectural baroque within an historical relationship between historiographical formation and architectural design in twentieth century architectural culture.

In so doing, this paper attempts to shed a thin shard of light upon the present-day historiography of the trajectory of the long modern development of architecture from the Renaissance to the present day. For Heinrich Wölfflin, writing in his 1888 book *Renaissance und Barock*, to understand the nature of architecture's "fall" after its golden Florentine age was fundamental not only to delineating the precise status of the baroque in the history of architecture, and in the Roman baroque above all, but also reflexively, for understanding the relationship between history writing and architectural practice through the availability of historical models and the application of historiographical categories to knowledge of the past.<sup>6</sup> This much can be said for the late nineteenth century discourse on style generally, and in German-language literature especially, but raising Wölfflin's articulation of a concern that one way or another persisted in scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s – even in the reversal of its argument in Giedion's writing – serves to illustrate the longevity of the view that the baroque could offer something either directly or indirectly to contemporary architectural culture. That Wölfflin's ideas would influence modernism whereas those of Zevi or Portoghesi would help shape postmodernism is neither here nor there. Whether historians understood the architectural baroque's fruit as a model, as an analogy, or as a field of knowledge available to the present remained a live discussion for much of the later twentieth century. The formulation of the terms with which Zevi and his colleagues presented Michelangelo in

Rome in 1964 was a fundamental intellectual shift predicating this wider development in critical and historical attitude to the early modern era. I present the case of *Michelangiolo architetto* with these implications firmly in mind.

### **Michelangiolo architetto**

The show “Michelangiolo architetto” opened early in the *anno michelangelano* of 1964 at Rome’s Palazzo delle Esposizioni on via Nazionale.<sup>7</sup> The eponymous catalogue consisted of two parts: a discursive section containing historical essays edited by Portoghesi and Zevi; and a colour catalogue of Michelangelo’s works edited by Franco Barbieri and Lionello Puppi and mainly grouped as a substantial appendix to the essays, with selected plates interspersed among those chapters directly referring to specific documents.<sup>8</sup> In the first section, each chapter considered one of Michelangelo’s major architectural achievements. Giulio Carlo Argan wrote on the tomb of Julius II, Roberto Pane on the Sistine Chapel, Aldo Bertini on the Sacrestia nuova of San Lorenzo, Portoghesi on the Laurentine Library, Renato Bonelli on the Campidoglio and (in a second essay) on the Palazzo Farnese, Sergio Bettini on San Pietro, Decio Gioseffi (in two essays) on San Giovanni dei Fiorentini and Porta Pia, and Zevi (in two further essays) on the fortifications of Florence and on Santa Maria degli Angeli (the latter concluding the volume). In addition to his three analytical contributions, Zevi introduced the 1000-page tome with an essay called “Attualità di Michelangiolo architetto” (The Contemporaneity of Michelangelo the Architect), which explained the institutional and conceptual origins of the *mostra* and its critical apparatus. Insofar as the themes followed by other contributors tended to extend the objectives described by Zevi’s introduction into specific examples I will limit my present observations to his discussion of historiographical method and objectives.<sup>9</sup>

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Zevi began by explaining the value of historical cases for students of architecture, describing how the approach of *Michelangiolo architetto* attends to this audience and, by extension, to the architecture profession. Having spent most of the war years in the United States – at Joseph Hudnut’s Harvard – he taught at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia from his return to Italy in 1945 until 1963, when he took up an appointment to the Scuola Superiore di Architettura di Roma. Anticipating the attention Michelangelo would enjoy in his commemorative year of 1964, between 1960 and 1963 Zevi set a number of student projects on the figure and his work.<sup>10</sup> These always, he carefully noted, assumed that for a student of architecture, an encounter with architectural history and its methods would only rarely lead towards a career in that specialist field. The study of architectural history by architecture students would always prove fruitful, but for the most part in the domain of professional practice rather than historical scholarship.<sup>11</sup> With this in mind, Zevi’s approach to architectural history teaching sought to distil the relevance of history for contemporary conditions in architectural culture. He recalled a first attempt in 1948 to think of architectural history in this way, asking students to analyse the Greek city in light of polemics on the “urban dimension”.<sup>12</sup> This ‘instrumentalisation of historical culture ... does not imply,’ he wrote,

some sacrifice of scientific rigour, because if the modern condition cues the choice of historical themes, then it is history that leads their study, broadening the scope of the questions, hypotheses and alternatives, their complex testimonies expanding the architects’ horizons.<sup>13</sup>

This rationale likewise informed the construction of “Michelangiolo architetto” – as an exhibition – for Zevi’s students. Editorialising concurrently in *l’Architettura* on his students’ activities, he further noted that ‘to discuss Michelangiolo does not mean to indulge in a mere contemplative exercise ... On the contrary, it provides an effective instrument for the

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evaluation of the most current and pregnant themes of today's architecture.<sup>14</sup> To this end, he drew three intersecting imperatives from a wider intellectual and cultural background to consider his subject: 'one contingent, the second in the order of the critico-scientific, and the third of a psychological and cultural nature.'<sup>15</sup> To the extent that these explain the terms under which he rendered Michelangelo "contemporary", it is useful to review his argument for each in turn.

In the first instance, anniversary of Michelangelo's death offered a significant and timely moment in which to advance the "lessons" of this architect through a range of cultural activities. Between exhibitions and books, articles and scientific meetings, films and lectures, students could benefit from a concentration of attention on the Michelangelan *œuvre*; their work, conversely, would add to this *anno michelangelano* within the same sphere as would the writing of senior historians. Zevi described, for instance, a project where students documented the Campidoglio, producing a series of 'spectacular photographic visions of the piazza' that offered an interpretation of the urban space 'with a modern critical spirit'. This 'unprejudiced and modern *approach*' treated the historical in contemporary terms.<sup>16</sup> Treated thus, Michelangelo's pertinence to present-day urban conditions qualified him as an 'architectural protagonist'.<sup>17</sup> This implied a more polemical, and indeed critical, approach to the historiography of Michelangelo than our present-day view on this episode might initially suggest.

If Zevi's goal was to claim Michelangelo for contemporary architecture, then he needed to redefine the terms of existing historiography on the subject. Modern architecture, Zevi argued elsewhere in the footsteps of Giedion, is fundamentally spatial in nature. In order to re-cast Michelangelo as a contemporary model, the spatiality of his work had to be acknowledged. Identifying trans-historical values made his work available and allowed students and

architects to draw potent lessons from it. He elsewhere made this plain in an editorial introduction to the issue of *l'Architettura* that presented – also in 1964, in parallel to the exhibition – the studies of his students. In “Michelangiolo in Prosa” he wrote: ‘Stripped of the heroic trappings and the hare of rhetoric spread by an overabundant laudatory literature, Michelangiolo’s buildings and designs pose urgent questions to modern architects, and therefore call for a review in the key of our own sensitivity.’<sup>18</sup> This call applied as readily to historians as to architects and architecture students. In *Michelangiolo architetto*, Zevi briefly surveyed German and Italian Michelangelo historiography up to 1963, and delved at some length into James Ackerman’s recently published *The Architecture of Michelangelo* – which he called a ‘cheery meeting between the German scientific apparatus and the Anglo-Saxon cultural climate.’<sup>19</sup> Zevi asserted that these studies had myopically read Michelangelo’s architectural *œuvre* ‘in a prevalently plastic key and not as a spatial conquest.’ Whatever analytical currency the theme of plasticity might have offered Michelangelo’s work as a whole, it forced him to ‘remain a sculptor, even when working as an architect’. Trading plasticity for spatiality corrected this lacuna, he proposed, and allowed architects ‘to reconstruct his ideative and constructive process with their inherent penetration.’<sup>20</sup>

It is anachronistic to apply twentieth century distinctions between sculpture and architecture to Michelangelo’s fifteenth and sixteenth century career. Nevertheless, Zevi treated as urgent the task of introducing the historiographical theme of “space” in contradistinction to “the plastic”. Applied to Michelangelo’s entire *œuvre*, spatiality established continuities across different kinds of practice, including painting and sculpture, that could be understood by the modern architect as spatial, thereby expanding his “utility” as a model for this audience beyond the narrower field of those of his Roman works conventionally treated as “architecture”. This resulted in a new historical trajectory that studied the evolution and application of *Michelangelan space*, which established a long and coherent trajectory of architectural values fulfilled in modernist spatiality. That Zevi extended this value from

building to city furthermore rendered Michelangelo important to contemporary urban problems. Michelangelo thus entered into a direct exchange with latter-day architects and planners, evidencing ‘a moral, professional and creative condition that ... is of vital interest to modern architects because ... to many it is comparable to our own.’ For modern architects looking to architectural history, Michelangelo ‘is the figure from whom [they] have most to learn, in as much as he performed in a sociological, linguistic and professional situation that presents extraordinary analogies with conditions that we also face.’ Standing in their way, he continued, is the myth of Michelangiolo as a ‘solitary and irreducible genius’ acting within and in spite of his cultural setting.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Contemporaneity of Michelangiolo**

If the *anno michelangelano* provided Zevi and Portoghesi with a platform for the reconsideration of this historical case, then Zevi’s introduction of a modern (and modernist) analytical theme permitted them to close the gap separating history from the present. Taking a third step, Zevi then argued Michelangelo’s relevance to contemporary architecture and urbanism: the *attualità* of his title. Zevi presented a terminological shift that allowed 1960s readers to appreciate Michelangelo’s spatiality and urbanicity where previous generations of historians had only perceived his plasticity – thus rendering his architecture an extension of his work as a sculptor. To affect a direct relationship between one moment and the other, however, it was necessary to present Michelangelo’s time on the same plane as that of Zevi and his readers; to this end, he offered an account of Michelangelo’s historical context. Medicean Florence of his youth, Zevi wrote, had already entered into an economic crisis under Lorenzo il Magnifico. It was a culture ‘corrupted and corrupting’ (citing De Sanctis), as was the Rome of Lorenzo’s son, Pope Leo X, which nourished the seeds of Rome’s Sack and of the universal crisis of values that marked the ‘alienated world’ of the mid-sixteenth century. This crisis of cultural values was equally a crisis of architectural values: ‘[architects] lacked the bases, the faith, the energy, and above all the need to prolong tradition; but in

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abandoning tradition one feels architecture having leapt into the void, into annihilation, and moreover into alienation.<sup>22</sup>

Zevi argued that it was impossible to regard Michelangelo purely as an index of his contemporaries' reactions to the loss of faith in traditional measures: the corrosion of rationalism, the reinvention of civility and new terms of religious repression. Where others sought to recover values proper to what we now call the Renaissance, he continued, Michelangelo sat firmly between Renaissance and baroque worlds. He was much less a father of the baroque, Zevi asserted, than a product of "mannerism", in which setting 'he forged his instruments of study.'<sup>23</sup> In Michelangelo's case one could not find an attempt to mediate between pre and post-Reformation worlds, or to find compromise between them. Rather, he looked deep into tradition to assess which of its values and practices remained relevant to the cultural, social and religious conditions of his own architecture, leaving aside that which no longer took the architect to the heart of the problems that those conditions posed. The individualism and genius of the Michelangelan myth fail as windows on to their subject, Zevi implied, if they did not address the cultural imperatives of the context of his practice. Not surprisingly, the most important among those imperatives are those shared by the post-war modern movement.

The analogy between these two contexts – the historical and the contemporary, both of which claiming repercussions throughout Europe – lay close to the surface of Zevi's argument. He nonetheless insisted on connecting up the dots that revealed a picture of Michelangelo's "actuality":

Between the two world wars, modern rationalism represented an extreme attempt to ransom the logic of life, to prepare a recognisable rule and as such to admit a

normative approach to teaching. In a four-dimensional key and in a setting of the most complex dynamic balances, functionalism, in its discomposed studies and modular investigations, clearly references Renaissance classicism.<sup>24</sup>

In his editorial “Michelangiolo in Prose” he argues this corollary with even greater clarity:

In a ‘manneristic’ age such as we are going through, his example is revealing: to the crisis of Renaissance classicism he offered an anomalous and heretical answer, evasive and not only elegantly evasive. Free from artful indulgence and metaphysical flights, this answer attacks all proportional rules: it compresses or expands, but always charges matter with explosive energy, breaking open the building envelope; it undermines the ‘box’ even when it assumes the dimensions of a mountain, as in the Vatican apse.<sup>25</sup>

Zevi thus put Michelangelo into direct play with the modern world, finding his “lessons” on either side of the corollaries between the sociological, cultural, political and artistic climates of mid-sixteenth and mid-twentieth century Rome that bore out immediately upon issues of artistic tradition and the responsibilities of the architect-intellectual. Zevi’s insistent theme concerned the response of this figure – of whom Michelangelo is the archetype – to a crisis of reason in which the major intellectual systems from which architecture had drawn its logic had failed: the marriage of Church and classicism in the Renaissance; and the modern alliance between the Enlightenment and functionalism.

Zevi noted a series of comparisons under a refrain of ‘also today ...’, the last of which reads: ‘Also today prevail the anguish and the burdensome arrears of the end of western civility.’<sup>26</sup>

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The critical imperative for the architect-intellectual Zevi conceived in Michelangelo's image came purely not from architecture itself, but from the need to bridge architecture and its socio-cultural context. Society's fate and architecture's were intertwined, and continue to be so. This point aligned neatly with the modernist view that with the right tools the architect can operate deep within the conditions of modern society to its betterment. This observation is borne out in a comparison of Zevi's own efforts to rally architecture and urbanism behind social issues provoked by unchecked suburban proliferation in post-war Italy. History (as a field of knowledge) is one such condition, a reservoir of analogies and examples that could help resolve aspects of the problems faced by modern architecture in modern society. Michelangelo (as a model) is another. He established an historical rule for the architect working within any social context, an example pertaining as much to the architect's persona as to his or her practice.

The relation of Michelangelo to the historiography of the classical tradition from fifteenth to seventeenth centuries is important in this respect. Michelangelo offered contemporary architecture a different model as a proto-baroque architect than he does as a "mannerist". Zevi acknowledged his formal and compositional freedom and his volumetric and spatial invention, qualities he doubtless shared with subsequent generations working in the seventeenth century. And yet it is the way in which that freedom and invention acted as a response to the cultural crises of sixteenth century Rome and to doubts cast upon the authority of the classical tradition that positioned Michelangelo as one who made an astute assessment of these crises while assuming a relentlessly "architectural" stance. His invention is more important as an example of how one could overcome the burdens of Roman culture after the Sack – or analogously of functionalism after the war – than for what it led to as precedent or influence.

Many have claimed that Michelangelo's insistence on architectural invention predicated the work that appeared in Rome a century after the Sack at the hands of Borromini and his contemporaries (but Borromini especially, for Zevi). An architect working in Rome in 1964 with Michelangelo's example in mind might, however, better understand how the modern profession could shrug off its functionalist burdens and pave the way for an approach to architectural design that could once again be characterised by a freedom informed by critical assessment. This is the nature of the influence that Zevi fostered as a dimension of Michelangelo's contemporaneity. To invoke a phrase that would later be turned against Zevi by Manfredo Tafuri, he effectively situates Michelangelo as an "operative critic" who demonstrated how the classicist world-view had lost currency while working to secure a future for architectural practice and culture independent of the fate of those traditions upon which that practice and culture had thus far relied.<sup>27</sup>

### **The "Un-finished" as an Operative Strategy**

The problems of mid-sixteenth century architectural culture are neither fundamentally cultural, as Zevi would have it, nor architectural. Rather, they arise from a complex traffic between conditions intrinsic and extrinsic to those architectural rules established in the mid-fifteenth century and ratified since. For architects working in Rome at the start of the sixteenth century, he continued in "Attualità di Michelangiolo", it was no longer adequate to remain loyal to abstract principles without 'accepting even one condition inherent to the dynamic process of an object's realisation.'<sup>28</sup> The shift in values experienced by architecture – and articulated by Michelangelo – was symptomatic of a larger reaction to humanist rules and the authority of the Church. To this extent, Zevi extracted a methodological rather than a formal principle from Michelangelo's response to this new imperative: '[He] expresses the torn world wherein we can find a precise tool: the un-finished [orig: non-finito], namely ... that which suggests a method rather than imposing closed solutions upon open problems.'<sup>29</sup>

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Zevi invited a comparison with the strictures of Albertian classicism, which defined issues of composition and delineation in such a way as to retard invention beyond the outer boundaries of architecture as it was constructed therein. Michelangelo's sculptures are "un-finished" as much as is his architecture. 'No building by Michelangiolo was finished,' he writes in "Michelangiolo in Prose".<sup>30</sup> In both art forms, the work evidenced a temporary reconciliation of tradition and invention whereby the authority of the former was proved in each instance against the imperatives of the latter. On this point, Zevi quoted from Sergio Bettini's essay on San Pietro: 'Is this un-finished desired or occasional? I believe that Michelangelo would have been free to complete to the best of his talents the figures that he left as sketches in the rough ...' This did not represent a psychological flaw, Zevi and Bettini agreed, but rather an 'operative method', equally relevant to the twentieth century as to the sixteenth.<sup>31</sup>

Its invocation relies upon a series of demands that I have considered above, but which it is useful to summarise: (1) to set aside the "myth" of Michelangelo's genius, thereby trading psychological characterisation for projective method; (2) to replace plasticity with spatiality as a critical theme in the Michelangelan *œuvre*, thereby treating Michelangelo on terms that correspond directly to the concerns of the modern architect; (3) to accept that Michelangelo was acutely aware of the interrelated crises facing architecture (in relation to a failing orthodoxy) and urban society (as the context in which the architect could act to the advancement of both causes); and (4) to allow that the situation in which Michelangelo practiced as an architect paralleled that of Zevi's present. Attending to this last point, Zevi made clear that Michelangelo's loss of faith in Alberti's codified classicism found a corollary in the crises facing modern architects who, after the second world war, could no longer subscribe to the rigours of functionalism in search of their answers to the problems then facing architecture and the city.

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This trans-historical availability relied upon one further condition that turns us, in conclusion, to historiographical matters. For Zevi, Michelangelo's importance lay not only in his expression of "doubt" in Renaissance classicism, but also in his translation of that doubt into an instrumental mode – which he called 'a method and a system' – that informed the work of later generations.<sup>32</sup> His case belongs properly to neither the Renaissance nor the baroque, yet for Zevi his lessons were fundamental to that later seventeenth century development for how they treated the restrictions imposed on architectural invention by architecture's fifteenth century arbitrators.

Upon the pivot of this lesson Michelangelo's contemporaneity turns. Zevi imagined the extrapolation of Michelangelo's "un-finished" to contemporary architectural culture whereby the architect following his model might rise above the problems posed to the profession and its artistic traditions by functionalist modernism. This would constitute a form of intellectual leadership that also learned from Michelangelo – in the absence, Zevi did not need to add, of contemporary exemplars. Any solutions that this figure might pose – formal, procedural, intellectual, political – would need to be open, and to remain so. Recent European history, in Italy and elsewhere, had thoroughly evidenced the dangers of intellectual closure. 'It would be naïve and absurd,' he wrote, 'to infer that Michelangelo's architecture can contribute to the solution of these problems.'<sup>33</sup> And yet in his case, the architectural culture of 1964 might find an example of how the architect could lead intellectually, as well as a model for how that figure might balance open enquiry (architectural invention) with the imperative to solve (the exigencies of practice).

Zevi's argument met with some opposition from younger historians, but was widely endorsed in its initial reception.<sup>34</sup> As a case for Michelangelo's intellectual inheritance in the twentieth century, it was quickly adapted as a model for treating historical subjects and brought to bear

upon the subject of the Roman baroque. In this respect, it helped to position Michelangelo's legacy in that later moment and to establish other cases, most notably Borromini (whose commemorative year followed in 1967), who were available to modern architecture and the modern architect on the same terms as had been Michelangelo.<sup>35</sup> Through the intellectual opening made by his consideration of Buonarroti, compounded by the agency of the *anno borrominiana*, Zevi and his generation extended their claims upon Michelangelo into the historiography of baroque architecture, constructing analogical bridges between that era and the twentieth century predicated on trans-historical categories imposed upon this architectural history. The theme of spatiality, above all, served to securely wed the baroque, its pre-history and its later trajectory to values celebrated by the modern movement.

Despite Tafuri's efforts to make later readers of such histories as these suspicious of the historian's objectives, and despite the cautiously hopeful patina that helps us recognise Portoghesi and Zevi's *Michelangiolo architetto* as a product of the 1960s, the position Zevi assumed in the book did much to bind the Germanic art historiographical theme of baroque space and spatiality to a post-war professional imperative. As such it now forms an episode in another kind of history concerning the relationship of historical knowledge and architectural ideas in twentieth century architectural culture. In this instance, the path from history to the profession is short and the steps taken to walk it fairly obvious from our current perspective. It serves, therefore, as a strong example of historical instrumentalisation where others, which we might consider weak by comparison, less clearly present the contemporaneity of their subjects. That these mechanisms should be most present and persistent in the historiography of the Roman architectural baroque – a trajectory extending, in the most generous terms, from Michelangelo to Piranesi – is a problem for further research.

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## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Zevi, “Michelangiolo in Prosa = Michelangelo in Prose”, *l'Architettura. Cronache e storia* 9, 99 (January 1964), 652.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Luka Skansi, “Form, Style, Rhythm, Autonomy: Ritm v arhitekture”, *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 17, 2 (2007), 92-115; Marco De Michelis, “The Last Dream and the Total Work of Art: Art and Architecture in Weimar Germany” in *Architecture and Arts 1900-2004: A Century of Creative Products in Building, Design, Cinema, Painting, Photography, Sculpture*, (ed.) Germano Celant (Milan: Skira, 2004), 53-58.

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Zevi employs spelling “Michelangiolo” rather than the more common “Michelangelo”. This paper uses the latter and translates instances of “Michelangiolo” in quotations of Zevi as “Michelangelo”. Where it appears in titles, the original spelling is left as it stands.

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Portoghesi, *Roma Barocca. Storia di una civiltà architettonica* (Rome: Carlo Bestetti, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> On the instrumentalisation of architectural history, see Monica Luca (ed.), *La critica operativa e l'architettura* (Milan: Unicopli, 2002). On Zevi generally, see especially Roberto Dulio, “Bruno Zevi. Le radici di un progetto storico 1933-1950” (PhD dissertation, Politecnico di Torino, 2004).\_Manfredo Tafuri famously reacted to this exhibition on the grounds of its operativity, on which theme see his *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari & Rome: Laterza), 165-97. On the relation of this discourse to the present case, see Tafuri's comments in Luisa Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri (Rome, February-March 1992),” trans. Denise L. Bratton, “Being Manfredo Tafuri,” *ANY* 25-26 (2000), 28-31. As Tafuri's translation of this reaction into a general critique of the Italian discipline follows some years after the fact, it forms a separate chapter to the present account, which I have, to an extent, written in *Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing History* (Ghent: A&S Books, 2007), 24-25, 115-138.

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (Munich: Theodor Ackermann, 1888).

<sup>7</sup> Zevi, “Michelangiolo in Prose,” 653. He commented that the Venetian Institute of Architectural History ‘was the first [in October 1960] in launching an appeal aimed to turn the 1964 centennial into a great cultural event. Official Italy, self-satisfied, academic and bumbling, was once again deaf to the appeal, but the invitation stimulated several scholars and University Institutes.’

<sup>8</sup> Paolo Portoghesi & Bruno Zevi (eds.), *Michelangiolo architetto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964).

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<sup>9</sup> Bruno Zevi, "Introduzione: Attualità di Michelangiolo architetto" in Portoghesi and Zevi (eds.), *Michelangiolo Architetto*, 11-27.

<sup>10</sup> He presents these activities as "L'opera architettonica di Michelangiolo nel quarto centenario della morte. Modelli, fotografie e commenti degli studenti dell'Istituto di Architettura di Venezia," *l'Architettura. Cronache e storia*, 9:99 (January 1964), 654-712.

<sup>11</sup> This position is consistent with Zevi's thoughts on the relationship between studio teaching and architectural history, recorded in the paper "History as a Method of Teaching Architecture" in Marcus Whiffen (ed.), *The History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture: Papers from the 1964 AIA-ASCA Teaching Seminar* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1970).

<sup>12</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 11-13.

<sup>13</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 12. All Italian-English translations are mine.

<sup>14</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", in Prose," 652.

<sup>15</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 12.

<sup>16</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 13. The italics are Zevi's, as he uses the English word 'approach'.

<sup>17</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione," 27.

<sup>18</sup> Zevi, "Michelangiolo in Prose", 652.

<sup>19</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 14. He refers to James Ackerman's *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (New York: Viking Press, 1961) and its attendant *Catalogue* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 15.

<sup>21</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 17-18. From this perspective, it is possible to see Zevi taking a firm position in contemporaneous debates on mannerism, the scope of which are documented most thoroughly at this moment in the section "Recent Concepts of Mannerism" convened by Ernst Gombrich at the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the History of Art. This panel included contributions on the subject by Craig Hugh Smyth, John Shearman, Frederick Hartt and Wolfgang Lodz, and described two general values ascribed mannerism: on one hand, the *maniera* of Vasari (the "stylish style"), privileging the artist's hand within the classical tradition; on the other, an expression of a crisis of values centring on the *Sacco di Roma*, a position elaborated by Zerner at another key survey of the field, the 1970 meeting of the New England Renaissance Society. Here Zevi falls in favour of the latter, explicitly against the former. See Ida E. Rubin (ed.), *The Renaissance and Mannerism: Studies in Western Art, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 163-255; Franklin W. Robinson and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (eds.), *The Meaning of Mannerism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1972); and Hessel Miedema, "On Mannerism and *maniera*", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 10:1 (1978-79), 19-45.

<sup>23</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 19.

<sup>24</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 21.

<sup>25</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", in Prose," 653.

<sup>26</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 21.

<sup>27</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 22.

<sup>28</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 23.

<sup>29</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 23.

<sup>30</sup> Zevi, "Michelangiolo in Prose", 652.

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<sup>31</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 24. Zevi cites from Sergio Bettini, "La fabbrica di San Pietro" in Zevi and Portoghesi (eds.), *Michelangiolo architetto*, 498-509. Zevi elsewhere describes the methodological correspondence thus: 'And here rise Michelangiolo's un-finished, the method of a "formation" which refuses to become enclosed into an objective "form" and relies upon organic growth, on a law of open development for which, however, it supplies the matrix.' – Zevi, "Michelangiolo in Prose", 652.

<sup>32</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> Zevi, "Introduzione", 26.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Manfredo Tafuri, "La mostra (incubo) di Michelangiolo", *Paese sera*, February 29, 1964, libri.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Bruno Zevi, "Attualità di Borromini", "Intervento di P. Portoghesi sulla relazione di B. Zevi" and "Riposta di B. Zevi all'intervento di P. Portoghesi" in *Studi sul Borromini. Atti del Convegno promosso dall'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 1972), 1, 507-30, 531-36 and 537-42 resp.