




MIND
and HAND
and EYE
architecture at rice
21





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MIND and HAND and EYE architecture at rice 21

Architecture at Rice University is a series of reports on thoughts and investigations from the School of Architecture. The series is published in the belief that education of architects can best be advanced as teachers, practitioners, students, and interested laymen share what they are thinking and doing.

William Ward Watkin, first chairman of the Department of Architecture at Rice University, and one of the designers of the Rice campus, originated plans for a traveling fellowship to allow outstanding students in architecture to travel and study in Europe. The first fellowship was awarded in 1928, and since then, 27 Rice graduates have been named William Ward Watkin Fellows. Funds for the award, which allows recipients to spend from three months to one year in Europe, are partially amassed by student projects, partially contributed by interested individuals. The winner each year is determined by a juried competition on an assigned problem. Michael Buckley, winner of the competition in 1965, has recorded his travels under the fellowship in diary and drawings . . . Architecture at Rice 21.

The Editor

Houston, Texas
June, 1967

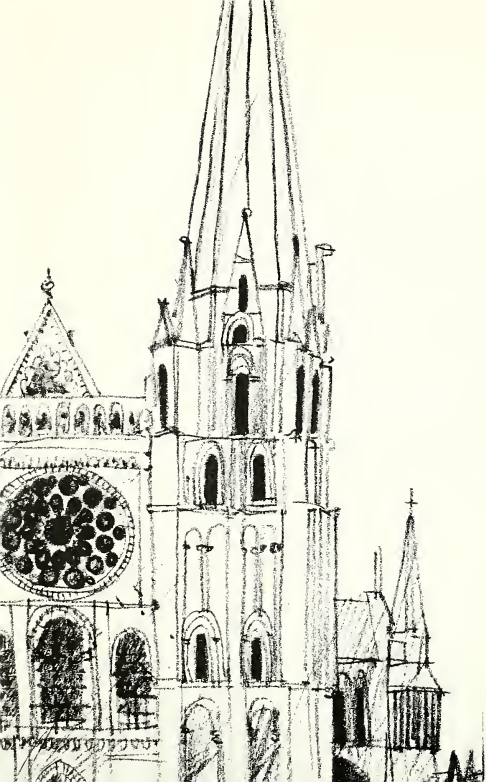
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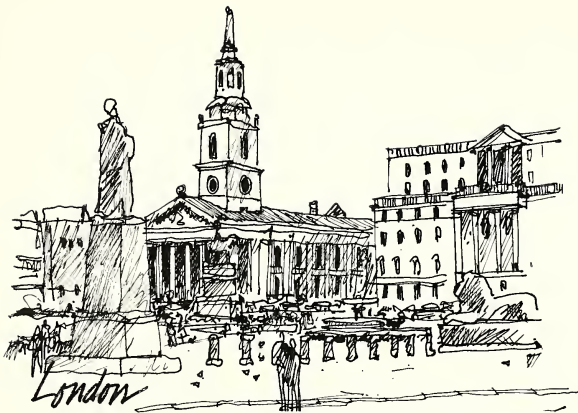
"Go to Paris and Rome and Ravenna and Padua. Stand alone in Sainte Chapelle, in the Sistine Chapel, in the Church of the Carmine in Florence. Know all that you can about art, and by all means have opinions. Never be afraid to become embroiled in art or life or politics; never be afraid to learn to draw or paint better than you already do— And remember that you are trying to learn to think what you want to think, that you are trying to coordinate mind and hand and eye."

Ben Shahn

What follows is a catalogue of impressions, excerpts from a journal, sketches off a pad— recorded in Europe while traveling as the William Ward Watkin Fellow 1965.

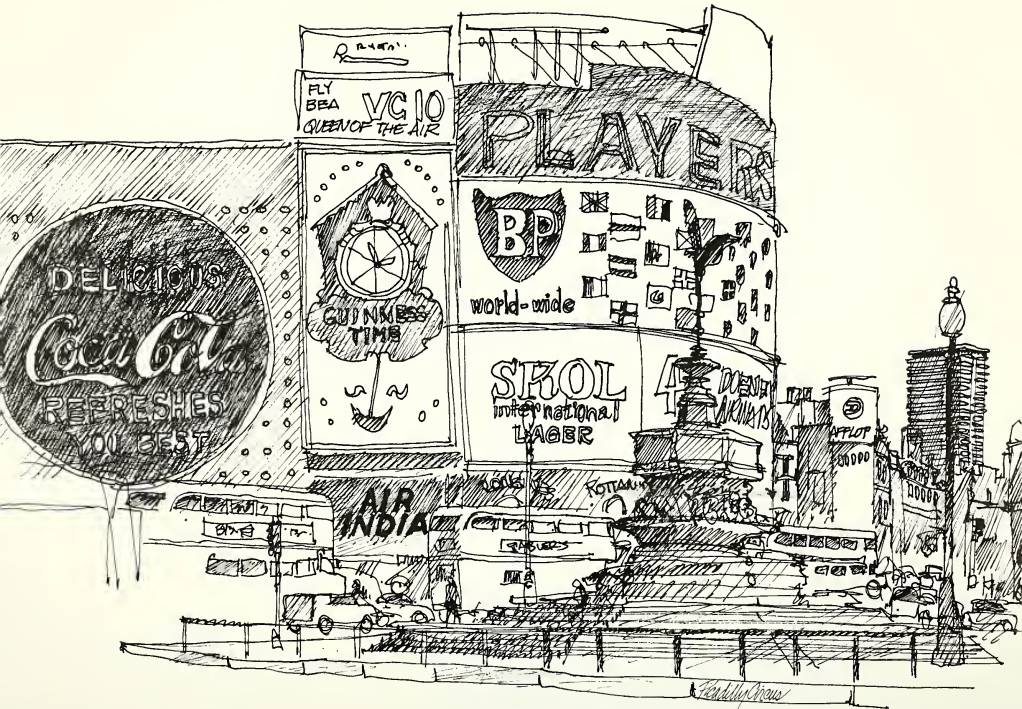
Michael Buckley / Boston 1967





Arrive morning August 27 — Heatherow Airport / riot of color at Picadilly Circus / lorries painted racing green / those fantastic scarlet double-deckered buses / bowlers, canes and pin-stripes on Threadneedle Street / good graphics everywhere, from corner pub to Indian restaurants reeking of saffron.

Pedestrian image: walk from Burlington Arcade and its Turkish cigarette shops to St. James Square, on to Trafalgar Square—its bronzed lions and breezy fountains, down Whitehall through Admiralty Arch to the Mall, then Green Park, on and on, one square of green to another—from the elegance of Georgian Bedford Square to the restrained exuberance of Soho Square—each rectangle of green tempered by the ordered rhythm of Victorian and Georgian facades.



FLY BEA VC10
QUEEN OF THE AIR

PLAYER

DELICIOUS
Coca-Cola
REFRESHES
YOU BEST

GUINNESS
TIME

BP
world-wide

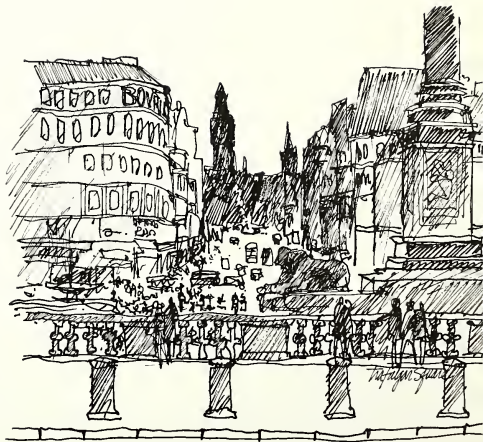
SKOL
international
LAGER

AIR
INDIA

Franklin Chaves

Dynamics: a Victorian city against the automobile / raw sense of motion from the top deck of a bus as it rolls down Charing Cross Road to Shaftsbury Avenue and swirls around Picadilly Circus / a 360° panorama of exuberant color and gigantic letters on billboards, theaters and cheap eateries / the fun of pigeons and water in Trafalgar Square / so incredibly messy yet immensely enjoyable. Must capture these kinesthetic experiences on film. A pity no one has utilized the cinema to teach urban design / no other media can portray so many aspects of space.

Color and texture: color experienced by its absence / cut stone and brick prevail. Concrete pavers set in sand beds, tapped with huge wooden mallets, staggered joints set up constant metered rhythm to pavement everywhere / quiet civility / broken by the dramatic kaleidoscope of Picadilly and the saucy streets of Soho.





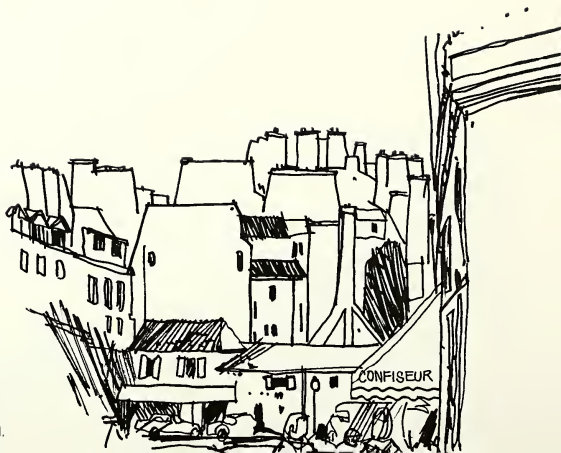
Paris / 7 September

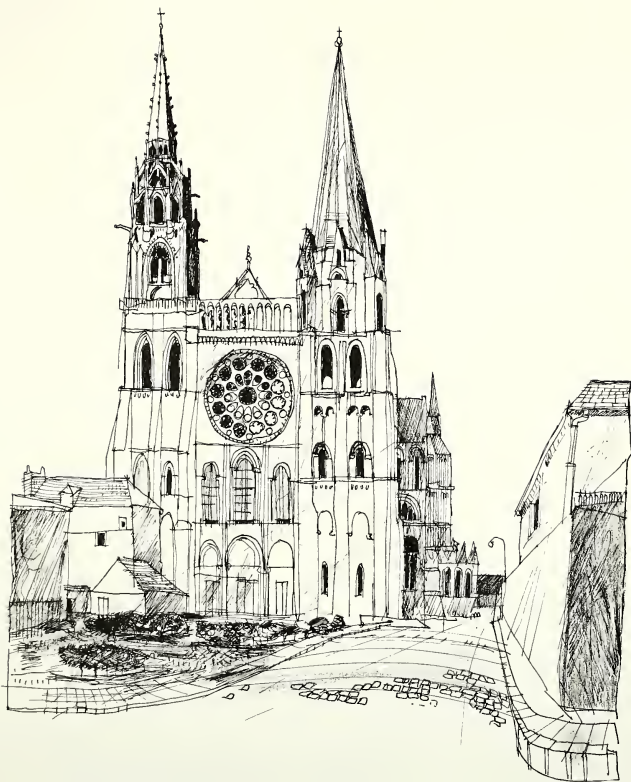
Jet from London
a return to Paris for us.
Eyes seek the familiar and
register the new / sweep of the
Champs Elysees up from
Place de la Concorde to
L'Arc de Triomphe, traffic
snarling about its base
intersecting yet more boulevards
of trees / linear axes which
disappear from sight / materials
textures and colors of
rubble-stone and stucco walls
clay chimney pots / radial
granite pavers / trees set in
elegant cast iron gratings
the blaze of yellow, red and
blue canvas awnings
contrast the quilted patchwork of
London.

L'Opera / saw La Traviata / fresh and
courageous ceiling by Marc Chagall
intermission: fantastic grand stair case
watching and ogling / always felt underdressed.
Hausman criticized for extravagance in creating
Place de L'Opera, the space now cluttered with
angry Citroens.

Louvre / great double-reversed staircase focuses on
Nike Samothrace / gives great sense of direction to lobby space
Michelangelo's Slaves — soft forms / Early Roman door pulls
animated / a colossal section of an Egyptian foot / medieval
twisted columns — precursors of Gaudi and Art Nouveau.

Stroll down Boulevard St. Germain to Cafe des Flores for a cognac
endless continually entertaining parade of people / Pierre Cardin
cut pants and geometric hair styles / haunts of Camus, Hemingway
and Sartre, the architectural environment contributes to the intellectual.





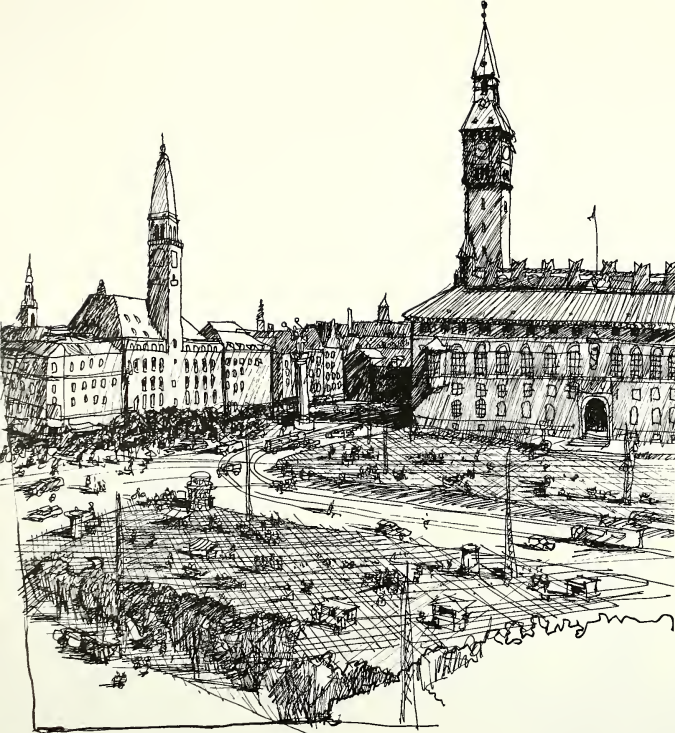
Chartres Cathedral

A traveler once met three men wheeling wheelbarrows: he asked of their work. The first said, "I toil from sunup to sundown — all I receive for my pains is a few francs." The second, "I am glad enough to wheel this barrow, for I have been out of work and have a family." The third replied: "I am building Chartres Cathedral."

The first view of the Church looming on the horizon — faint shape over fields of yellow grain / the masterful proportions / fabled Chartres blue in the glass simply a wonder. Henry Adams: "The man who wanders into the 12th century is lost, unless he can grow prematurely young."



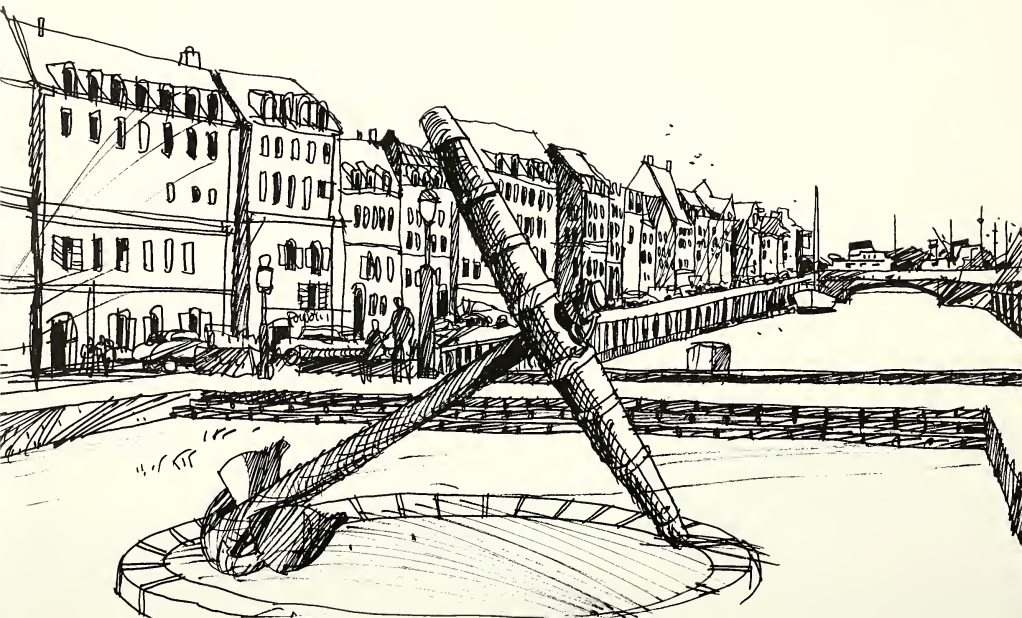
Notre Dame de Chartres - Septembre 23, 1960 - Michael Buckley



Thousands of bicycles / pots of flowers in the Rådhusplads — the town hall square / walk up the Strødt — a long curving street closed to automobiles / lined with exquisite craft shops / people milling everywhere along this commercial spine / stork fountains / glimpses of brick steeples and pocket-sized parks up side streets.

Through Kongens Nytorv Square to the huge fluked anchor resting atop a thin granite disk — a compelling memorial to Danes lost at sea — the Anchor fronts Nyhavn, a harbor slip lined with candy-colored houses and bistros. Across the harbor to Christianshavn — older than Nyhavn but less diluted by tourism. Fishermen living on their boats / the intimate relationship between water and structure / nimble children playing along the banks.

Copenhagen / 20 September

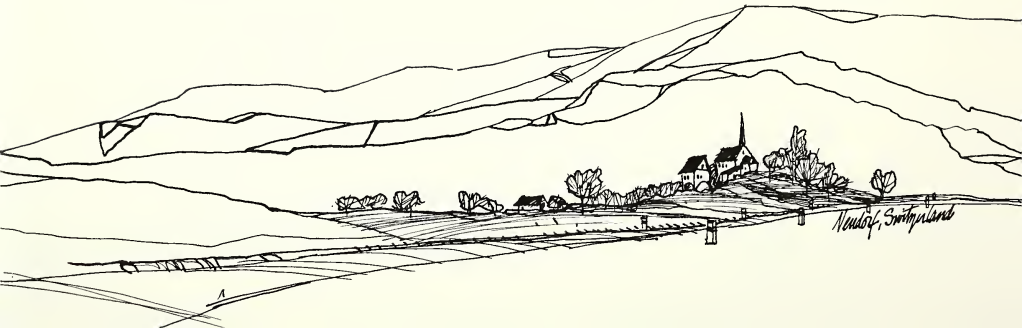




Visited Frilandsmuseet —
a unique open-air museum
of expertly re-constructed
homes from Danish Isles of
Funen, Skaane, Jutland, and Bornholm.
Feathery thatched roofs and rough-hewn
timber interiors / common climate reflected
in minimum glass. The idea of this park-museum
is deftly handled: no gimmicks, unnecessary signs,
trash cans or concessions — instead meticulous attention to
landscaping details — like encountering seagrass in sand mounds
near a Skaane Fisherman's cottage, thatched with sea-weed, while 100
yards further down the artfully curved foot-path will sit a Jutland farmer's
house and barn, tile roofed, with saucer-eyed cows gazing nearby in the
open. Extremely low-keyed display — excellent. After tour we are
treated to a huge luncheon commanded by a robust Dane determined to
exhibit Danish cuisine and the taste of snaps — brewed from potato —
chased with beer.

October 10 — Leave Copenhagen, push down through Germany to Neudorf, Switzerland, farm village of 750 souls, one being Ben Stocker, Architecturbo, graduate of Rice University. Idyllic week, side trips to Lucerne / story-book Engleberg with its stern monastery school and Titles Peak / the hospitable Stocker clan, their warm cosy Gausthaus / eating in the kitchen with the family, retiring to the restaurant-bar for Sauser, hot Kirsch in coffee, and talks of politics and architecture / Swiss tradition of architectural competitions furnishes a sure way for young talent.

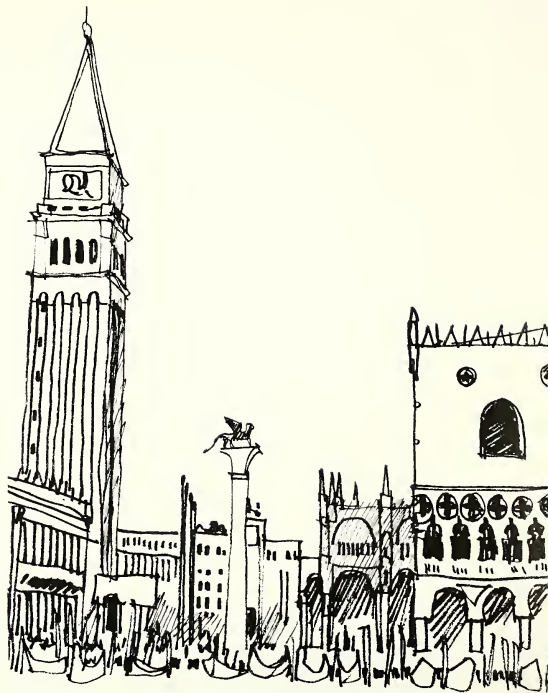
Relaxing days of cowbells at 7 a.m. — built in chimes really / misty valleys and clear mountainous heights / trudging out over the back meadows to inspect Ben's first job — a masonry apartment block — simple and clean. To mass at the village church with separated congregation, men right — women left — and the cemetery outside the door where seven generations of Stockers lie.

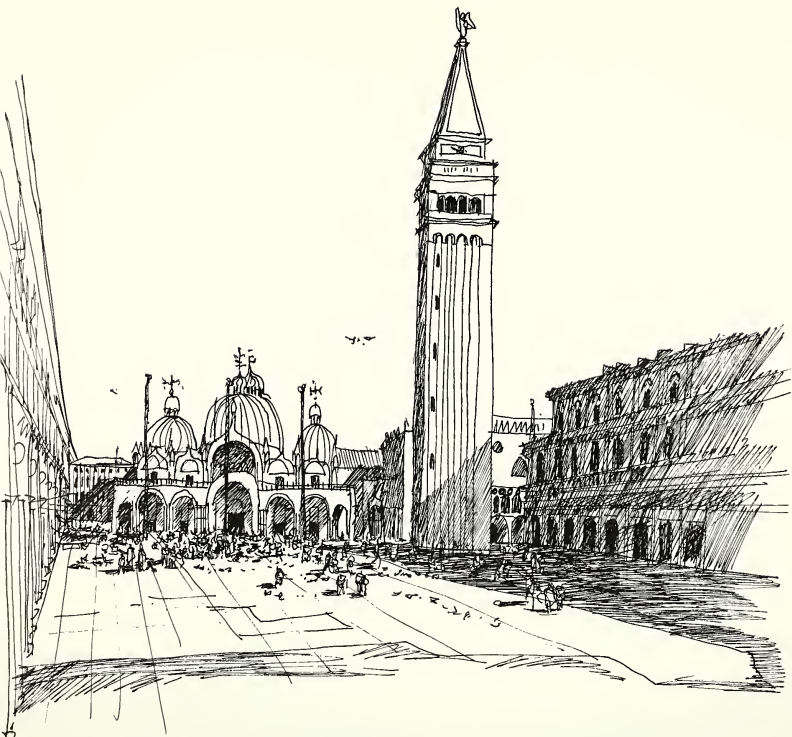


Venice / 19 October

Found a hotel right on the Canale Grande and immediately jumped a vaporetto for the trip to San Marco: pattering so slowly that the palazzos appear as paper cutouts glued to a tape and pulled past the boat. Gondolas fascinating in form and design: why this curve? and that one? Why has the profile remained so exclusive? Intoxicating rhythm of the Gondoliers — the precarious ballet of sweeping poles.

Piazza San Marco — Arrival by boat: spectacular stage setting that glitters above the flat plane of water. The serenity at night is laced with intrigue as not an object is directly lit along the canal but rather catches light from reflections of a gondola station lamp bobbing at the top of its striped pole, or a cage lantern of purple Venetian glass marking a watery intersection. Absence of neon, automobile and street lights is felt — not realized: Venice teaches you to hear sounds once forgotten — lapping of water on a palazzo's steps, the gentle knocking about of moored gondolas and the distant chug-a-lug of a vaporetto.







Florence / 22 October

Tiny, tiny streets
between the Ponte Trinita
and the Ponte Vecchio
Dark tight walks
restraining arches overhead
as if the buildings themselves
were infirm
Heavy gloom and cold
of early October dusk
Wood workers in their vaulted
ground floor caves
constrained by masonry
two feet thick
One incandescent bulb
illuminating.
Florence has the feeling of a
dark walled city
without the walls.

Tight urban weave
relaxed unexpectedly in
Piazza della Signoria
scale is colossal — the
crenelations atop the
Palazzo Vecchio are easily
the height of a man,
yet scan quickly down
the flat uncomplicated front
to the ground plane
and gargantuan statutory
deceives the eye —
the piazza then acquires
new dimensions by comparison.

Scale is reversed in
the Pazzi Chapel by Brunelleschi:
by deft use of proportions
and screen like shadows —
this tiny chapel commands
the visual attention
of the entire courtyard.





The constant visual texture of Florence is organic-rock walls stuccoed over—thick and cold—slim alleyways as streets—the piazza becomes an oasis within the twisted maze—where Italian exuberance is reflected by color and texture. Could you imagine a brightly colored church in London or Paris? The delightful S. Spirito is plastered yellow ochre—its simple unadorned front becomes the most tranquil and reassuring element in the piazza—the bustle of the daily vegetable market, the afternoon soccer game, the varied heights, and textures of the neighboring palazzos are then strong accents against this muted background of yellow.

Contrast: S. Maria Novella and S. Croce / striking paste-on marble facades white and black marble striping / bits of color tossed in as accents / or the prominent red and white tiled bowl of the Duomo / brash juxtaposition of values on a cardboard face—effective urban accents like the spiky gymnastics of French gothic cathedrals.





The Italian Hill Towns / 30 October

Siena — tortuous driving to approach this traditional rival of Florence.

Could drive only to the back of the town hall — set out on foot to find a hotel. Narrow streets, steep stairs and brick everywhere — no place for a claustrophobic. Then around a corner, under a tight archway, down some steps and the Piazza del Campo bursts the walls, admits the sun. The huge fan-shaped piazza fronts the Palazzo Pubblico — we were parking in back, having no clue to this vast space in front. The three hills of Siena meet here, and their slopes give the Piazza its cockle-shell form — a monumental backyard for a choked medieval metropolis.

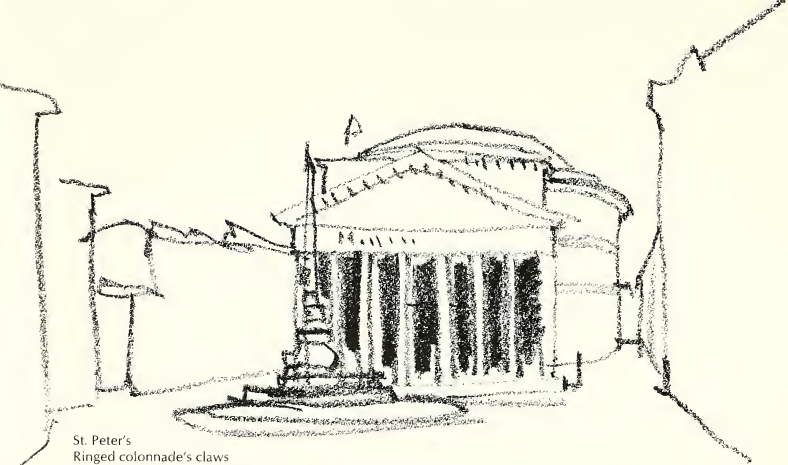
Sat for an hour, sipping cappuchino, drawing and watching the ebb and flow of people through the eleven archwayed entry streets and the similar exodus and roosting of swallows in the thousand-odd weepholes of the 268-foot bell tower — the ejaculation point of the space. After dinner we join the great promenade up and down the central streets — no cars or buses, just the entire populace walking, greeting friends, and the constant shuffle of feet.

Assisi — All Soul's day in this city of St. Francis is glutted with tourists and sweaty pilgrims. Saw Giotto frescoes, in the cathedral and retired to enjoy the fresco of the city itself from the valley floor: The Basilica squats atop the monastery whose four-story arched buttresses at one end oppose the amorphous growth of the city at the other — all sprinkled down the slopes of Monte Subasio.

Reflections on the Hill Towns — Absence of automobile must be experienced to appreciate the salient quality of silence. Stone work bleeds into the hills — colors and textures mingle — one senses the mass of the entire city from the common materials, be it stone in S. Gimignano or red-brick in Siena. Violent changes in level occur constantly, yielding frequent stairways, steps — yet this common condition is made dramatic in form, sensuous, curving and compelling. Rarely can one find just ordinary steps. Forgotten cities of the twentieth century will remain for all the spaces within the walls which made them tolerable in Gothic times still exist — the developer has been shut outside the walls.



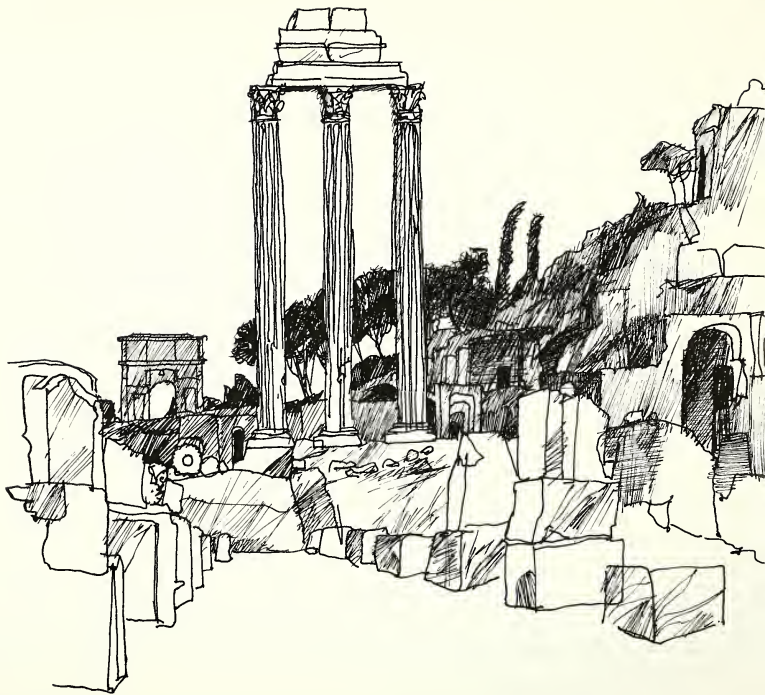
Rome / 2 November



St. Peter's

Ringed colonnade's claws
squeeze the dish shaped Piazza /
granite-block paving overlaps in fans
like peacock feathers and rolls up to the Basilica /
Cold November day outside forgotten
in the blaze of red velvet seating for the Council /
superb bronze doors by Manzu.
Pantheon — absence of glazing in the oculus overhead /
clouds floating by clear and bright / ethereal /
the illusion of an immense space /
a science fiction cinema set.

Cheery day for a side trip to Tivoli —
a fantasy of water: fountains splashing, bubbling and jetting in sequence.
The walks cross and recross down a hillside
intersecting axes which terminate in still another spray /
paving patters, moss greened masonry /
foliage screens one fountain from another cascade /
gurgle of water everywhere / the sounds are immediate, then echoed /
every promenade becomes a private stroll — one always feels alone.





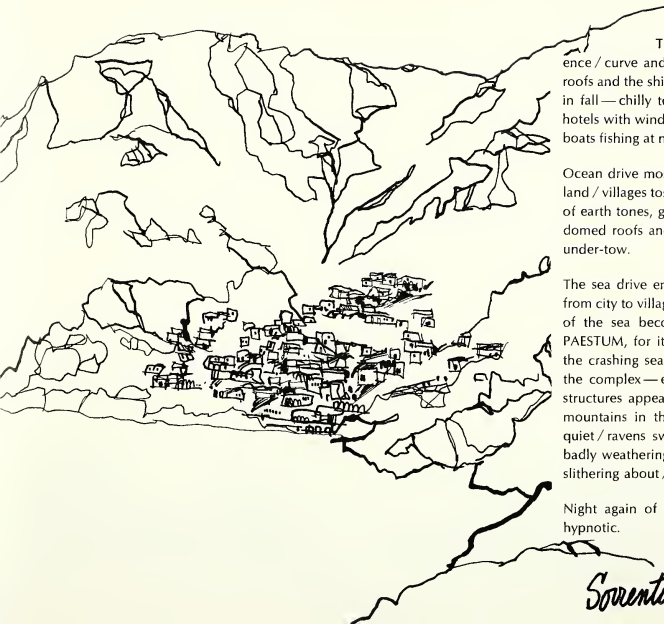
Piazza di Spagna — colossal double-reversed staircase provides a continual chain of grand entrances: from the church, a leisurely walk down the steps, a pause at the flower vendor, a mad dash for the boat fountain — and a steady audience all the while — a unique appreciation of spatial scale.

Earth tones of russet brown and yellow ochre plasterwork really sparkle after a rain at night. We wait for the rain and dash out — no matter what the hour — for a car tour: the baroque fountains of Piazza Naronna and S. Maria in Trastevere, artfully floodlit / the twelve-point star paving of the Piazza Campidoglio glistens around the marble base of the bronze Marcus Aurelius equestrian / the rain scrubbed yellow ochre Senate Palace and Michelangelo's Twin Loggias frame the statue and complete the superb compound / discover the Roman Forum by skirting the Campidoglio group — and suddenly, from a belvedere, the ruins of Imperial Rome lie at your feet — concealed lights throwing mysterious shadows in exciting places.



Pompeii / 10 November

Scale of ruins huge and rambling / Moody Vesuvius overshadows all / its presence felt like an unfriendly neighbor. From its size, even at this distance, one can well imagine the terror of its eruption. Ruts in the rock streets cut by chariot wheels / stepping stones spaced across the road just to allow certain chariot wheel bases to pass / Storm sewers, lead piping underground. Chills and clammy palms at seeing plaster casts of molds left in hot ash by inhabitants in their death throes — servant boy hiding under a wine jar; a dog fighting to break his chain — unnerving.



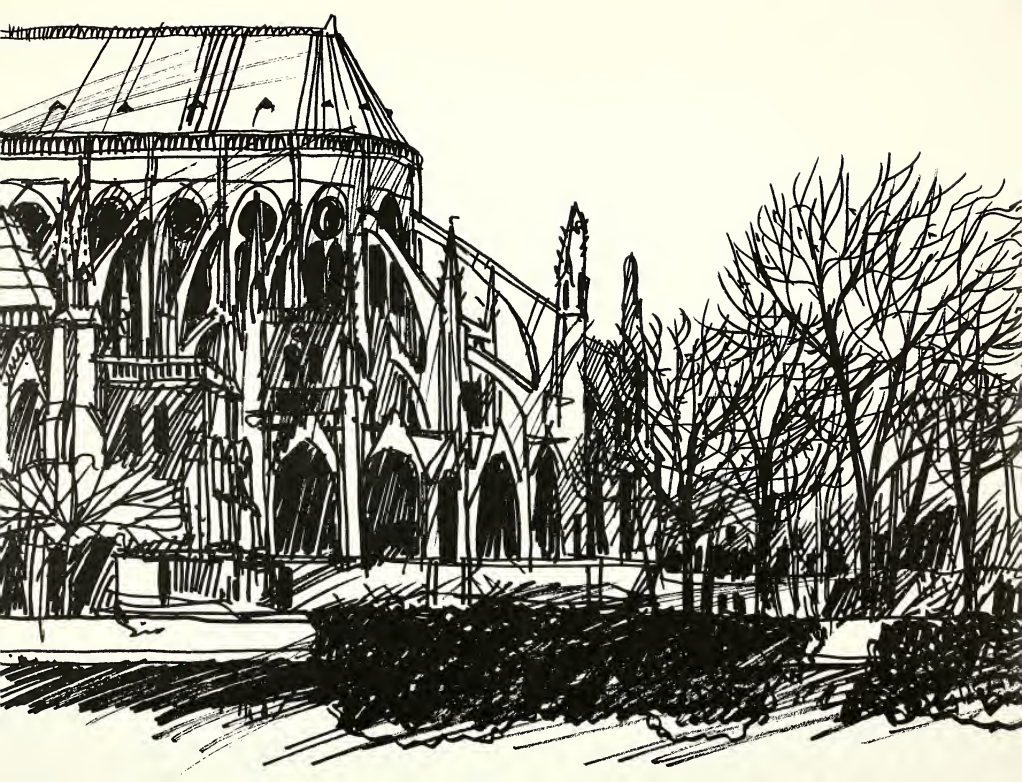
The Amalfitina Drive — marvelous kinesthetic experience / curve and snake along the sheer rock face, glimpsing white roofs and the shining Mediterranean. Towns nearly deserted this late in fall — chilly too — but we are enthralled. Staying in near-empty hotels with windows open to the Bay of Naples and watching firefly boats fishing at night.

Ocean drive most primeval scene / rugged and savage as sea meets land / villages tossed on the rock face as if by chance / sharp division of earth tones, grey rock, scrubby greens and brilliant white of flat-domed roofs and the sea blue-green as the waves bubble into the under-tow.

The sea drive ends at Salerno, proceeds inland, gradually receding from city to village to countryside. This progression from the violence of the sea becomes important to the visitor of the temples at PAESTUM, for its site is unique by contrast, the residual image of the crashing sea is constantly in the mind. Three temples stand in the complex — each so adroitly sited atop a gentle berm that the structures appear to float. Ochre-colored stone / the looming blue mountains in the distance / the superb loneliness of its site / the quiet / ravens swooping to nest in eaves of stone / overgrowth of badly weathering ruins of the old city, complete with green lizards slithering about / a singularly mysterious and intoxicating place.

Night again of the Bay of Naples — unceasing crash of water is hypnotic.

Sovento, Positano, Amalfi





Rome to Paris / December 2

Back to to Rome for a rest, on to Paris via the Italian and French Rivas — famed resorts of Portofino, Monaco and Cannes devoid of people and spirit in late November.

Vezelay — Escargots at the Lion d'Or; we awaken the next morning to find the village and its Romanesque cathedral shrouded with snow.

Fontainebleau — clear crisp day: sentimental stroll about the deserted grounds — a solitary swan patrolling the carp pond brings to mind an idyllic summer spent here in 1963.

Paris — secure for the winter: street life gone as sidewalk cafes retreat from the chill behind glass fronts — the thin transparent planes negate all the viable aspects by their mere presence / yet students throng book stores on Boulevard St. Michel and chestnut vendors brave the chill — but somehow Paris is sad in winter — sadder still for us — for we must be leaving.

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