

Drawing Imagination and the Imagination of Drawing:

The case of Tiberio Alfarano's drawing of St. Peter's Basilica

Federica Goffi

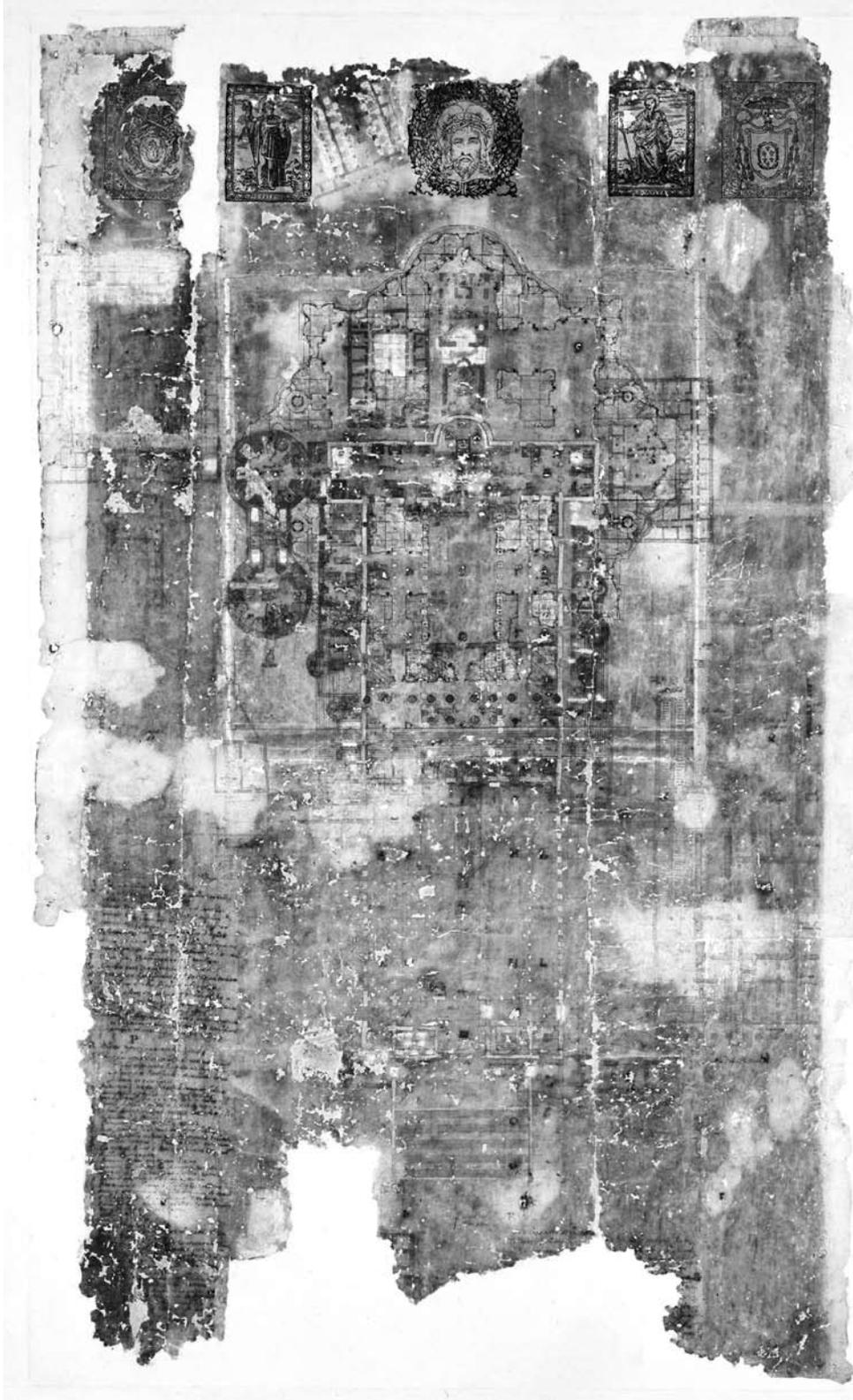
I. Tiberio Alfarano was a beneficiary clerk of the Basilica. Whether he was considered an architect in his own time is uncertain. What can be confirmed is that he describes the Vatican basilica in his manuscript with precise language, which leads one to believe that he had a prominent interest in architecture; his ability to layer meanings into the drawing bears witness to his skillfulness, inventiveness and his understanding of architectural representation. Recently scholars credited to Alfarano the mastering of "the art of architectural drawing to a certain extent" (Frommel 1994: 598-600). One should also think that the idea of who was an architect was much more fluid than it is today (Kostof 2001).

...there is always a tension. There is a drawing out [*du triage*], a traction: in a word, a line [*un trait*]. There is an invisible, untraced line that draws out and traces on both sides, that passes between the two without passing anywhere. It draws out and traces nothing, perhaps, but this impalpable line... (Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*)

In contemporary understanding, architectural drawing produces an image of likeness; as such, representation renounces its dialogue with the humanities and becomes a narcissistic act, focused on the production of a self-reflection of the visual world, a duplication that does not allow a transcending of the visible, and provides a fixed image. In this way, representation nowadays is preoccupied with the production of finished photogenic rendered pictures, rather than interpreting drawing as a vehicle for representing and imagining change or transformation. This essay will argue that it is a mistake to believe in photo renderings as the best way of accessing a building. The dominance of photorealistic images should be challenged, undermining the notion that architectural drawing is a portrayal of likeness, and restoring its full potential as an iconic representation of presence. It is possible to enter a building through ambiguous imagery and unfinished representation, experiencing a kind of real *transitus* of the sort that religious icons allow (Florensky 2000).

Hybrid-drawing

Tiberio Alfarano's 1571 hybrid-drawing of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican goes well beyond representing a one-time likeness, and provides a metaphysical gateway into experiencing this building (Fig. 1). This is not achieved through exact visual duplication, but through a combination of past and present form, expressing allegorical significance. Alfarano produced a hybrid-drawing, combining traditional architectural representation with *decoupage* and techniques of representation typical of icon paintings. His work is porous to the cultural context in which it was produced. As a scholar of the Basilica's history, a theologian and *connoisseur* of architecture, he wove into his drawing a complex body of religious, political, architectural and cultural elements. Alfarano's ground-plan is, in Carlo Ginzburg's terms, a singularity, presenting a series of anomalies when compared with the surviving body of renovation drawings (Ginzburg 1993: 13). A key anomaly in this process is the fact that Alfarano was not, strictly speaking, an architect and this is not a design drawing per se.¹



Alfarano is the author of a hybrid representation that is unique among period drawings. His ground-plan exhibits the use of advanced techniques, carrying within itself a new hybrid language, merging architectural representation with the language of icons; this drawing could only have been conceived by someone who was not only a good *connoisseur* of architecture, but also had an in-depth understanding of theology and its associated visual imagery. Someone who was thus well aware of the interdependence of words and images through an understanding of sacred scriptures, and the notion of incarnated word, which became central to the defense of the icon in the face of the attacks generated by the Protestant Reformation against sacred images.

Fig. 1: Tiberio Alfarano, *Iconographia*, 1571, mixed medium: hand drawing and print, 1172 x 666 mm. © Courtesy of the Archivio della Fabbrica di San Pietro (AFSP).

2. From the Greek *iknos*, i.e. track, footprint and *graphia* i.e. writing, the ichnography is a "track-drawing". Alfarano tracks the site changes in the drawing, all the way back to the presence of Roman mausoleums underneath the basilica. Those structures are outlined in his drawings – similarly to other temples and churches – with red ink. A cross-hatched *poche* completes their rendering. The mausoleum's walls are drawn last, after completing the rendering of Michelangelo's walls with white wash and azure coloration. The Roman mausoleums appear to be drawn in a more sketchy and imprecise manner, compared with the outline of Old St. Peter's footprint.

3. Information regarding the archeological layers of the drawing and its materiality in terms of both medium and techniques is taken from Silvan (1992), Notiziario (1994) and direct observations by Professor Nazareno Gabrielli (conservation expert of the Vatican Museum) and from the author of this paper in June 2009. The drawing is currently conserved at the Archivio della Fabbrica di San Pietro.

4. The Mandylion, for example, is constituted of several layers, such as a wooden board, onto which the original cloth is mounted; several painted layers have been added over time to preserve an original image disappearing, not unlike the *Sancta Sanctorum*. The Mandylion and its layers were then framed into an elaborate gold and silver encasing. For a reading of the complex layering of strata of the Mandylion see Wolf, Dufour Bozzo and Calderoni Masetti (2004: 102-206) and for the *Sancta Sanctorum* see Marino (2005: 31-49).

5. Ernst Gombrich's comments on the workings of "double images" (2000: 3-30), which allow a viewer to switch from one reading to the other. The notion of double images helps us understand the invisible workings of Alfarano's plan. In the case of Gombrich, the ambiguity of the reading rests in the question: is this a "Rabbit or Duck?". Gombrich states that, "the shape on the paper resembles neither animal very closely. And yet there is no doubt that the shape transforms itself in some subtle way when the duck's beak becomes the rabbit's ears and brings an otherwise neglected spot into prominence as the rabbit's mouth. [...] we are compelled to look for what is 'really there', to see the shape apart from its interpretation, and this, we soon discover, is not really possible." (2000: 5)

6. The word "presence" is used here with the significance attributed to it by Hans Belting (1994).

Exploiting the ambiguity of metaphoric transparency, Alfarano draws his plan as a transparent veil. This drawing provides a unique interpretation of the notion of ichnography (ground plan), going beyond a mere footprint, carrying the impression on earth of the process of fabrication, simultaneously being a representation of both above and below, before and after. The plan allows multiple readings, detecting the literal and metaphorical presence of a building within a building. Ichnography is interpreted through this drawing as a "track-drawing," providing memory traces on the drawing-site, making the passage of time visible, through unique colour renderings, revealing different time-layers, and the meaning of drawing as unfinished palimpsest-in-the-making.²

The primary medium for the drawing consisted of several sheets of paper of various dimensions, quality and consistency, joined together, and glued onto a wooden support. On this medium Alfarano initially outlined in graphite the plan of the old basilica. He started drafting his drawing after Michelangelo's plan was committed to print in 1569 by the well-known engraver Etienne Duperac, four years after Michelangelo's death. A fragment of this print is glued above the old plan, thus producing a *decoupage*.³ This hybrid-making combines traditional drawing methods with *decoupage*, abducted from the art of cabinetry, and in so doing the drawing process mimics the renovation process. *Decoupage*, from the French *decouper*, literally means to cut out, assembling unrelated elements to form a new whole. The use of *decoupage* reveals an understanding of the nature of the Renaissance process of addition, as the coming together of different members, which are re-assembled to form a renewed body. The cutting up of Duperac's print by Alfarano is an act of selection and alteration, that is then continued by re-drawing and painting onto the decoupage plan. By literally writing over Michelangelo's plan, the new temple's central design is being questioned.

The wooden board used to execute the *decoupage* becomes a permanent and essential physical substratum for the drawing. This is not unlike the wooden board onto which the original Mandylion cloth, a true effigy of Christ, was mounted, becoming inseparable from its support. In this context we might say that Alfarano's supporting board for his drawing is the equivalent of the Vatican grounds, an original hypostatic foundation bearing the building and its multiple iterations, with all of its deep strata of time and meaning, forming a unique *locus* where time and place form an indissolubly merged presence. In a mnemonic site/building like St. Peter's, all of time happens in a single individual place in spatio-temporal continuity.⁴

'Hallowed configuration'

Alfarano's double plan, portraying new and old members together, is thought-provoking and stimulates the imagination of conservation, asking the onlooker to gaze beyond the image, to project other possible futures.⁵ Alfarano makes visible, and stimulates, a dialogue between new and old, yet to be resolved. He contemplates past, present and future simultaneously, through a metaphoric transparency, producing a multilayered plan. The drawing conveys not just a likeness, but a real presence, of a thing signified, which is a hybrid-body formed by new and old vestiges, conserved underneath a new building.⁶ The width of the new main nave corresponds to that of the old; this design move by Bramante allowed the original footprint to be conserved intact, thus ensuring that the new foundations do not interfere with the old plan. The original ichnography reveals,

predicts, even generates what the future ought to be, unveiling a ‘hallowed configuration’ (*Lat. forma sacrosanctae*) created by merging two plans (Fig. 2). The terminology of hallowed configuration, which Alfarano attributed to his ichnography, is an inviolable portraiture, capturing the essence of the thing signified beyond a one-time likeness (Cerrati 1914: LII). The Latin word “*forma*”, whilst translated as configuration, is used here to indicate not just a geometrical outline but also an evoked sacred presence. Presence is charged with a significance, which Hans Belting (1994) explains relates to something beyond mere likeness, to embody essence. Alfarano’s ground-plan brings back to light the presence of sacred burials taking place in the main aisle and transept of the old temple. Their conservation was essential and became a decisive element determining the position of the new main piers.⁷

Iconic representation reaches beyond the physical to include a non-visible dimension. Alfarano’s ground-plan unveils the Old St. Peter’s contained within the New. His drawing becomes a place where the multi-temporal dimension of the design process can be experienced as memory of the past and revealer of future presence. Parallels with the relationship between Old and New Testament, where “the promise of the former was fulfilled in the latter,” also inform the production of this drawing, through its intertwined narratives (Wood 1992). The relationship between old and new is not arbitrary, as Alfarano depicts the temple in a state of transmutation, metamorphosing from one form to another, portraying the merging of multiple plans brought into coincidence by a “ubiquitous gaze” (De Certeau 1987: 13). The dialogue between the two plans determines the position of the new piers. Bramante located the eastern piers right under the crossing of old transept and main nave. The challenge for the vaulting of St. Peter’s dome is determined by the necessity to conserve the main nave. When the width of the nave is applied east-west, the position of the western piers is foretold. As a result, Peter’s grave, which according to tradition should be located beneath the altar, is not placed in the geometric centre of the crossing of the four piers.

This idea of architectural drawing as palimpsest-in-the-making is also informed by the Renaissance allegory of prudence. Titian’s *Allegory of Prudence* (c. 1565-70) illustrates the threefold power of sight as memory of things past and foresight of the future, which together allow one to act prudently in the present. Alfarano’s account is made possible by the fact that he was a first-hand witness, for about half a century, to the changes that took place there. In addition he relied on the recollections of his teacher Giacomo Hercolano, who had been present at St. Peter’s since the period of Bramante’s early designs (c. 1505-1506). Thus Alfarano’s gaze is informed by a prudent understanding of narrative, where the present can be stated and the future evoked, making present past memories. The Renaissance imagery of prudence, such as that of Titian, is, in turn, indebted to the two-headed Roman god of gates, beginnings and endings, Janus, who had the ability to look in two directions in space and time. Janus’s double vision was allegorically expressed in the idea of threshold (see Panofsky 1955: 181-205).

Veronica’s icon, which Alfarano places in the top centre of the drawing, is like a ‘Janus-keystone’, reminding us to read the ground-plan in two directions – spatially and temporally – to achieve revelation. This reading is inspired by a Christian concept of memory, manifested in Christ’s own effigy.⁸ Veronica’s holy cloth is not just a memory of Christ’s appearance during His life on earth, but also a prefiguration of a future vision to be revealed at the end-of-time. In a letter

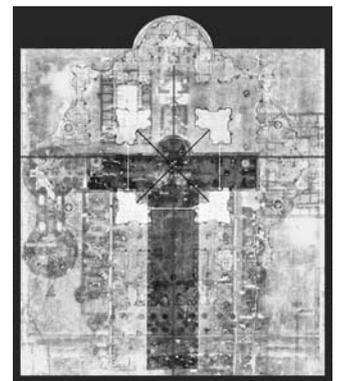


Fig. 2: Tiberio Alfarano, *Iconographia*, 1571. Detail showing how the design dialogue between the old and the new plan reveals that the positioning of the new piers is determined by the necessity to preserve the old main nave and transept intact. © Federica Goffi. Original image courtesy of the AFSP (St Peter’s)

Fig. 3: Silvestro, scroll letter, 1300. Vatican archives. © Morello and Wolf 2000: 123.

7. The basilica is from the beginning a space of many purposes, acting as memorial, burial site, and liturgy (de Blaauw 1994). To define perdurance of identity within changes through time one needs to define a certain stability of the image, which can be defined as a *fabrication* of memory through the making of a drawing-effigy, identifying stable elements which allow sustaining identity. Old main nave and transept are the elected cemetery of the Church. Julius II stated that it is imperative to preserve them intact (Cerrati 1914: 3-4).

8. "Memory thus had a retrospective and, curious as it sounds a prospective character. Its object was not only what had happened but what was promised. Outside of religion, this kind of consciousness of time has become remote to us" (Belting 1994: 10).

9. The so-called "Letter by the pontifical writer Silvestro", dated February 22, 1300, is a letter to Christendom by Pope Boniface VIII explaining and commemorating the beginning of the Jubilee. The writer "Silvestro", was at the time *scriptor* for Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), and worked for the papal curia (Morello, 2000).

10. This is not unlike the phenomenon experienced when observing a Rubin Vase, where two images, 'face' and 'vase' allow perceptual shifts from one representation to the other.

from 1300, in the Vatican archives, by the pontifical writer Silvestro, a Veronica icon appears on both ends of a scroll (Fig. 3).⁹ The duplication of the icon above and below indicates beginning and ending, and alludes to the scrolling of linear time in opposite directions, signifying a relationship between memory and foretelling, as mirror images. The writing of the text converges towards the centre of the scroll, where the present is generated.

Old St. Peter's is thus present almost metonymically within the new. Through metaphoric transparency, the observer's gaze is directed in two opposite directions simultaneously. Veronica was a blind woman who, by placing her face in contact with the Holy cloth, regained sight (see Kuryluk 1991). Contemplating Alfarano's plan *ad faciem* one regains sight of the invisible presence of Old St. Peter's, and understands the relationship between new and old, as an inversion of interior with exterior.¹⁰ The point of coincidence lies in the visible figure in which the gaze grasps the invisible element active within the figure.

This instrument for the passing (*transumptio*) from one "seeing" to the other is the mirror. Mounted inside the texts, it is the equivalent of poetic quotations in the mystic treatises of the sixteenth century. For the mirror is to the visual what the illuminatory "word" is to the verbal." (De Certeau 1987: 8)

In 1434 Flemish painter Jan Van Eyck mounted a mirror within his portrait of the Arnolfini family; the mirror hung on a wall in the background of the portrait offers a counter-viewpoint, described by de Certeau as "a place located inside the painted framework and often decorated as the monstrance or reliquary that circumscribes the appearance of another world" (ibid). Alfarano's new plan is the monstrance or reliquary of the old, making visible another dimension, hidden in Duperac's print, and his drawing above Michelangelo's plan is the equivalent of mounting a mirror within the plan and reading the story in two directions.

The role of ambiguity

The significance of colour in this drawing has never been discussed in the scholarly literature. Using theories of functional specialisation of the visual brain by the contemporary British neuroscientist Semir Zeki (1999), it is possible to infer that by blocking out the element of colour, scholars have applied a specialised reading, focused on one predominant element, which is the geometric form, and thus eluding questions of iconographic significance. Filtering out significant layers of meaning, these commentators have focused on the value of the drawing as a document witnessing physical locations of altars and precious relics, and providing information about geometric outline and the position of new and old elements relative to one another. But only a simultaneous reading of different layers of meaning allows one to grasp the complexity of a multi-layered making and thinking. The drawing, like a veil, bears the traces of the building's presence within time. Through the use of colour, the ground-plan truly becomes a "track-drawing", making the passage of time perceivable.

The ambiguous drawing of two plans forming a double-image is enhanced by differentiated colours, which facilitate switching the reading, from Latin to Greek plan, and bring to the foreground that which is in the background, revealing a figure/ground relationship between them. While looking at the drawing

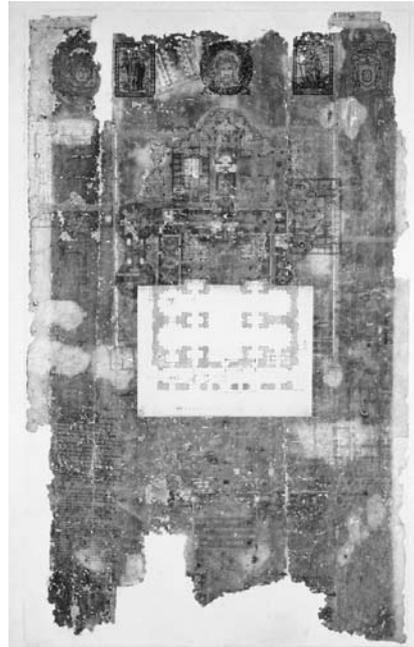


Fig. 4: *Christ, One and Trinity* (Cristo uno e trino), St. Agata Church, Perugia (1290-1314 ca) © Bollati Boringhieri Editore.

Fig. 6: Digital superimposition of Carlo Maderno's 1607-12 plan onto Alfarano's 1571 drawing. © Federica Goffi. Original images courtesy of the AFSP (St Peter's) and GDU (Uffizi).

a chosen layer can change position, from rear to front and *vice versa*, generating an instability of the image and allowing multiple readings. Ambiguity makes the viewer an active participant, something that would have been significant to Alfarano, whose intention was to unveil a hidden presence. He unconsciously exploited a characteristic of the human brain and its workings with ambiguous images, where the onlooker takes advantage of a "knowledge seeking role" of the brain, in "providing different interpretations, and thus enhancing his or her experience of the work" (Zeki 1999: 63).

Similarly ambiguous imagery can be found in the depiction of *Christ, One and Trinity* in the Church of St. Agata in Perugia, where Christ is represented with three heads, looking in three directions in space and time. Only two eyes are painted in order not to confuse the onlooker, making possible multiple readings (Fig. 4). The sharing of elements facilitates the switching back and forth between them. Similarly in the design of New St. Peter's significant lines/walls are shared, contributing to creating a double image. The merging becomes evident in drawing details defining the central crossing. Columns and walls overlap. Gold paint is used to render the old columns, while thin azure tempera is used for Michelangelo's plan, weaving together the geometry of the crossing. Boundaries of old and new merge into each other, so that neither image is complete without the other, requiring an active engagement of the imagination (Fig. 5). A dual representation allows ambiguous, yet precisely shifted, readings. Alfarano produced an "accurately inaccurate" bi-stable image, revealing the ambiguous presence of Old St. Peter's within the New (Zeki 1999). This hallowed configuration depicting a hybrid plan became the substratum for the imagination of conservation, defining a collective daydreaming strategy according to which multiple authors can imagine possible futures. When, in 1605, Carlo Maderno imagined his new addition for an elongated eastern arm, he initially drew on a sheet of paper overlaid onto Alfarano's plan, to fulfil the hallowed configuration, circumscribing the old one entirely, and adopting Alfarano's stratigraphic drawing strategy and his daydream of a hybrid plan (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5: Tiberio Alfarano, *Iconographia*, 1571. Detail of the central crossing of St. Peter's. © Courtesy of the AFSP.



Fig. 7: Jirí Kolár, *Cow having eaten up Canaletto*, 1968. © Thames & Hudson.

Fig. 8: *Intercollage revealing the presence of the old within the new*. © Federica Goffi.

Intercollage

The intercollages of Czech artist Jirí Kolár (1914-2002), where two images come together to form a third, might be brought into this discussion, as an *a posteriori* element, in order to fully understand Alfarano's drawing (Fig. 7). In Kolár's words, "The principal image of one reproduction is cut out and in its place another totally unrelated element is inserted. Thus, the effect of intercollage results from unexpected encounters of unrelated elements" (Kolár 1978: 18). Kolár also stated that "The acts of crumpling, tearing and cutting are not really destructive but rather are like a kind of interrogation. ... I am curious about what exists beyond the page or behind a picture" (Kolár 1978: 18). Alfarano's plan could be interpreted as an "intercollage", in that it showcases the presence of the old plan contained within the new, and unveils its presence. By looking in two directions, through the medium of drawing, one can see the reason for the approval of Bramante's project.⁹ By cutting out the footprint of main nave and transept from Alfarano's plan, and intercollaging within it a fragment of Ugo da Carpi's altarpiece (1525) for Veronica's altar, it is possible to make visible a hallowed configuration, resulting from a dialogue between two plans, defining a particular relationship, where Old and New St. Peter's inhabit each other metonymically, through a simultaneity effect, analogous to the one exhibited by Kolár's work (Fig. 8). Intercollage penetrates beyond the world of the visible into the invisible, to find that which lies beyond. The image created is ambiguous, but not in the sense of being vague. The dual reading is precise; neither image is complete without the other. Ambiguity is very important because, as Semir Zeki explains, it solicits the involvement of different areas of the brain simultaneously, thus initiating a process of multiple interpretations (Zeki 1999).

Old St Peter's conforms to the Latin-cross typology of the martyrdom basilica. The composite plan is created by the addition of a Renaissance central body. Alfarano reveals the necessity of a hybrid plan, through which Old St. Peter's can be re-presented within the New. Through the condition of the present, the drawing looks towards past and future, allowing having memory while, at the same time, having pre-figuration of something that will be. Drawing here is performance, rather than final output, allowing one to perceive duration, through a construction of memory.

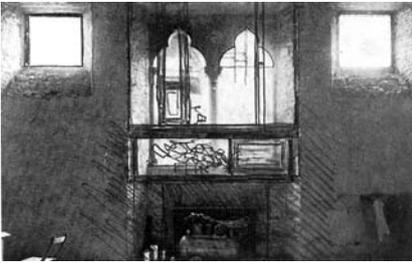


Fig. 9: Carlo Scarpa. Free hand ink drawing on photograph (1950s-70s). Detail of a window towards the courtyard. Sketch of the new interior window mouldings. © Castelvecchio Museum.

Reflections on modern and contemporary conservation in light of Alfarano's drawing

Simultaneity entails the possibility of two or more events entering a single, instantaneous perception. In the work of a modern master of architecture and time, Carlo Scarpa, gates and thresholds at the Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona, demonstrate an approach to architectural conservation, through layering and transparency. It is in looking through the gap that the images of past and future merge (Goffi 2006). In designing one of the windows that looks out toward the courtyard Scarpa drew directly on a photograph, layering a new design and allowing, through transparency, the possibility of reading two time-layers simultaneously, thus revealing the permeability of time (Fig. 9). Alfarano's plan draws its power from the fact that it is not a physical double; it is a representation of metaphysical essence beyond one-time likeness, allowing a real *transitus* into St. Peter's, analogous to that of religious icons. The possibility of displacement, penetrating the image beyond the visible, can be realised with a drawing that retains possibility for imagination. This cannot be accomplished by simply producing a photorealistic double, but rather through "the path of *admiratio* [astonishment] itself, an imageless surprise, an opening to the unknown," which is achieved through a contemplative gaze reaching beyond that which sight seizes in the realm of the visible (De Certeau 1987: 18). Conversely, exact replicas allow viewing at a present as-is condition, coinciding with the visible, but do not make possible a real *transumption*, gazing beyond the visible.

Alfarano produced a bi-stable image. St. Peter's is simultaneously present in two places, before and after, allowing for a displacement that is no longer physical but intellectual. The ambiguous reading of two plans forms a double-image enhanced by colours, which facilitate switching the reading around, making the viewer an active participant. Drawing as veil reveals supra-temporal presence, and provides for interpreting the drawing as a window through time. This provides the possibility of critically reassessing architectural-conservation in present practice as a form of invention and imagination. The dialogue between architecture and conservation might be reignited through such hybrid-drawing strategies.

Grasping the significance of Alfarano's drawing, one begins to comprehend the mistaken belief in the primacy of photo rendering to access a building and conserve its essence. Any essence cannot be achieved through exact visual reconstruction, rather through a chiasmus of past and present form, expressing allegoric significance. Ambiguity is at the source of the understanding of conservation, which today is often interpreted as the preservation of a still-shot, an understanding informed by the belief that by displaying photographic memory of the past, it is possible to gain access to it. But naturalistic representation is unequivocal and presents the onlooker with a single meaning immortalised by instantaneous still-images. Instead ambiguity and polysemy generate an equivocal space where unforeseeable inventions might occur through a process of future predictions enhanced by the recollection of memories (De Certeau 1987). "Hallowed configuration" is polysemic, and opens up the possibility of a proliferation of simultaneous stories.

11. The 1989 *Recto/Verso* Cibachrome photograms (11" x 14") are described by Landweber as "made without the use of camera or film. A single page from a mass-circulation magazine was placed in direct contact with color photographic paper and exposed to light. The resulting image superimposes the visual and verbal information from the front and back of the magazine page. No collage, manipulation, or other handwork was employed." http://www.landweber.com/RectoVerso/rv_writers_3.html (Accessed on February 19, 2010)

12. Translated by author of this paper from: "La basilica era una sola, che nella storia era apparsa sotto strutture diverse." Maderno cited in Spagnesi (1997: 24).

The traction of drawing resides precisely in this ability to draw out the imagination, allowing for multiple interpretations. Alfaraño's drawing goes well beyond an archive of past histories. It is an instrument in-forming a living consciousness of the Vatican palimpsest, allowing us to grasp its significance, and experience a real *transitus*, into these sacred grounds. The haptic qualities of the drawing demonstrate through the archeological strata of represented layers, the superimposition and merging of two buildings. Indeed, the relief gold paint is a demonstration of a haptic real presence of Constantine's original cross, revealed during the 1940s' excavations around the *confessio* area (Apollonj Ghetti et al. 1951).

The depiction of "one-time likeness" reduces memory to an instant story without history. This is relevant in regards to contemporary survey techniques such as orthographic photography, which presently provides the field of conservation with documentation methods of unprecedented accuracy, contributing to generate the illusion that the past can be preserved, capturing an instantaneous still-shot, thus producing images without imagination, to be preserved as is. The photograph becomes the model for what is believed to be a truthful representation of the past. Photographic representation is unequivocal and presents the onlooker with a single meaning. Conversely, iconic portraiture is polysemic, and generates an equivocal space where multiple meanings and the proliferation of simultaneous stories is possible.

Nevertheless, "found" orthographic photographs could instead be interpreted as an imaginative *substratum* for future representations. Alterations and additions could be made visible through layered representation techniques in the media of hybrid drawing-photographs, not unlike like the one made by Carlo Scarpa for Castelvecchio. Through metaphoric or literal transparency of a medium, combined with appropriate representation techniques, the past might dwell within a possible future; in this rests the possibility for a resurfacing of memories, and a possibility for a real transubstantiation from one condition to another. Architectural-conservation drawings should be interpreted as a phenomenological palimpsest, forming a contiguous imagery, reminding us of the work of contemporary American photographer Robert Heinecken, and his 1989 *Recto/Verso* photograph overlays. Writer James Enyeart comments on Robert Heinecken's work: "Contiguous imagery in an artist's work is the imagination's imitation of the mind's working process. It is impossible to imagine thinking one thought at a time or completing a thought without the overlay of another."¹¹

Renaissance St. Peter's is not the result of a destruction of substance through a change of form; it should be interpreted as a paradigmatic model of palimpsest renewal, understood as an imaginative form of conservation in spatio-temporal continuity. New and Old St. Peter's are one and the same building, even if notably different, to the point of not resembling one another. In Carlo Maderno's own words, "The basilica is one, even though through history it appeared under diverse likenesses."¹² Architectural-conservation drawings should not portray an image to be preserved as is, like an archival document, but an image, which is the maker of change. A "hallowed configuration" is a substratum for the imagination of conservation. A drawing so conceived is an epiphanic demonstration, providing a serendipitous moment of sudden revelation and insight into the essence of a building.

Current interpretations of conservation, exhibiting prodigious photographic memory, reveal an understanding of the past as inventory, and are gradually

congealing our imagination of conservation, limiting our understanding of the past to a “read-only experience”. Buildings and drawings should once again be conceived as unfinished entities, allowing for selective remembering and willful forgetting, closely approximating the secret inner workings of human memory, entailing continual renewal and allowing for meaningful change, rather than simply denying it. The retrospective and prospective character of the architectural-conservation process can be experienced through the intermediacy of hybrid-drawings in the present. Directing the gaze simultaneously in two directions allows a pre-existent condition to be engaged in a dialogue with a future design, something that does not happen in today’s practice, where built, in the form of measured drawings of existing conditions, and design drawings are often kept separate. Architectural drawings could rejoin these two temporal conditions, through metaphoric or literal transparency, looking in two directions “in-time” and allowing for a real transformation of the building, within continuity of identity.

The narrative of the transformations that took place on the Vatican palimpsest cannot be told through a homogeneous single history. Rather than recording work in progress (the working drawing), or celebrating the completed project (the final scheme), Alfarano’s drawing conveys a convergence of time. Indeed, St Peter’s Basilica is conceived as a temporal co-existence between old and new, redolent of St Augustine’s concept of the “threefold present”. Place is constructed over time, merging multiple unfinished stories. Religious icons are intended to reach beyond the physical to include not only a non-visible dimension, but also, more importantly, the non-temporal dimension. It is through a simultaneous looking in two directions that one is able to transcend a single time frame and is transported in a non-temporal condition contemplating the icon-drawing, presenting the basilica and imagining other possible futures. In embracing the flow of time, one embraces change and the heterogeneous. Alfarano’s work goes beyond modern aestheticism and reaches towards devotion. The mirror at work in his drawing is the revealing agent of a history, hidden but present. This sacred portrait is a gate, which can be accessed through contemplation, allowing the transformation of a perceptible visual experience into mystic vision.

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