

# FACADE AND FORM IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF KRISTO SOTIRI

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## Abstract

This study is a part of research into the components and tools of architectural composition. Its goal is to analyze how the articulations of the facade changed stylistically from the Renaissance to the Modern era. The initial theory is that the "Façade's" architectural component is strongly associated to the time period "from the 14th century (Reinassance) until the early 20th century" (Modernism).

The preliminary hypothesis is that the composite element of the "Façade" is closely related to the period: from the Renaissance to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With modern architecture, the concept of the "Façade" begins to "crumble" and after that "eliminated" during postmodern architecture through the process of "Museification". This period also coincides with the drawing of the façade as "elevation" with the principle of central perspective, emphasizing that the facade in architecture is a consequence, dominated by the concept of the central perspective.

The methodology was created following in-depth examinations of people who studied composition in architecture, not just facades. It is based on the examination of selected architectural creations from particular historical periods. To highlight the structural relationship between the interior and the façade, these works will be examined on iconographic, orthographic, and scenographic levels. In order to establish and learn some compositional rules in the structure of facades, the façade itself will also be explained.

The conclusions drawn from this section will be applied as a methodology to analyze the architectural works of Kristo Sotiri, as a local example to prove the above hypothesis and to define the historical position of his architectural works.

**Keywords:** Architecture, Composition, Façade, Form, Perspective.

## 1 FACADE IN REINASSANCE

There are countless theories on how the term "façade" came to be used as an architectural component. Most experts agree that the beginnings of the architectural façade may be traced to the development of Romanesque architecture in Europe, when medieval cathedrals were built as a "addition" to the already-existing structure. In this instance, the outside is entirely independent of the interior. It doesn't establish a structural connection to the interior. The following article overlooks this initial stage of the facade's development because, at the time, this component was constructed "in situ" and wasn't formally drawn. Also, it was built without establishing a stylistic link between the outside and the inside. Italian Renaissance architecture is directly related to the first instances of technical drawings regarding façades. Beginning in this era, the facade emerges as a powerful architectural component that aims to closely connect the inside and exterior. In Leon Battista Alberti's two major masterpieces, this relationship between interior architecture and the outer facade that is visible in public space is evident. The first is related to the drawing of the Santa Maria Novella Church in Florence, and the second is related to the Church of Sant' Andrea in Mantua, as shown in Figs. 1, 2. In both cases, there is a clear relationship between the design of the inner space and the main façade of the church.

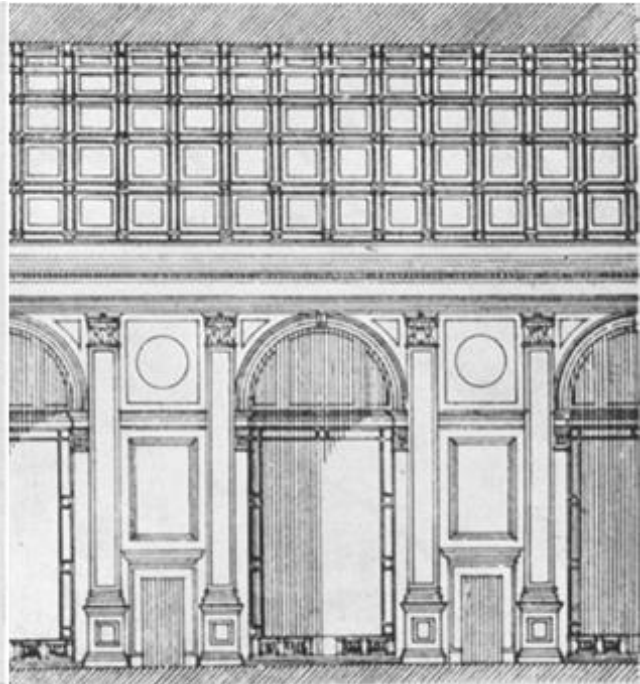


Fig. 1 Sant' Andrea di Mantova (Façade)

Fig. 2 Sant' Andrea di Mantova (Longitudinal Section)

(WITTKOWER 1940:16). These figures show a direct relationship between the elevation (the facade) and the interior (the longitudinal Section).

In Wittkower's study of Alberti, he emphasizes this structural relationship in the construction of Sant' Andrea in Mantua. Due to the two separate historical and stylistic eras and the two different architectural styles, the façade of Santa Maria Novella is built in accordance with a geometric rule that is essentially autonomous from the interior design. In this instance, Alberti completes a partially completed Gothic façade by adding the current portion in the drawing in the manner of Renaissance architecture. The Gothic-style back of the church is staged in a manner similar to that of the façade by the Florentine author. Wittkower (1940) claimed that a square can be engraved with the facade of the Santa Maria Novella church. In this drawing, which can be inscribed in a square's geometric form, the gothic portion at the back is separated from it, and volutes are even used to conceal the difference in height between the façade and the naves that were behind. In the second instance, Sant' Andrea, there is a clear structural connection between the interior and exterior drawings of the church. The drawing of the façade, according to Wittkower (1940), is inspired by the Arch of Trajan in Ancona. It was constructed in the second century AD by the Roman Senate. For the point we are making, there is another important component of Sant' Andrea's goal that interests us. This characteristic is specifically related to the close affinity that this work's facade and interior compositions share.

## 2 FACADE IN BAROQUE

Due to the theatricalization of the architectural form (as a result of the counter-form created by Concilio di Trento (1545–1563)) and the overall dynamic social movement accelerated by the scientific context, the facade acquires special significance during the Baroque period and turns into one of the most technically drawn elements. The counter-theatricalization form's of space and the introduction of dynamic movement into architecture through the use of curved and open forms served to orient people toward Catholicism. Carlo Maderno introduced the first baroque architectural creations in this environment, which were followed by Bernini, Borromini, and Berrettini (Pietro da Cortona). The facade of San Carlino of Borromini is a prime example of dynamical architecture because it undergoes a dissociation at the level of the dome in addition to continuing the inner architecture. This may be the first instance in which the facade is employed as a "theatrical curtain" that is separate from what is behind it. There are two primary levels to the façade of San Carlino in this instance. The first level is the entryway, where the church's internal energy is continued by the façade's energy. The folding façade of the dome's second level continues from the level above but is isolated from the back. In contrast to Sant' Andrea in Mantua, where this relationship was based on a close similarity, in this instance there is a structural difference between the relationship between the interior and the façade. At San Carlino, the outside is a structural continuation of the interior. The concave and convex portions of San Carlino's façade continue the internal space's folds. This strategy, in which the façade reflects the energy of the internal areas, is a defining characteristic of Baroque architecture.



Fig. 3. San Carlino alle Quattro Fontane. Borromini (B. Madhi). The figure shows a direct relationship of formal continuity.



Fig. 4 Sant'Andrea al Quirinale. Bernini (B. Madhi) The figure shows a direct relationship of formal continuity.

Unlike the previous ones, the baroque façade has been altered to become a three-dimensional volume. There are several cases. There is one like this on almost every baroque structure. We will mention Santa Maria Della Pace of Berrettini, San Carlino of Borromini, Sant' Andrea al Quirinale of Bernini, and Sant' Andrea Della Valle of Maderno. All of these examples show formal dynamism in elevation and plan. The façade and the inside of the building are connected structurally and are attached to one another. The core perspective dictates how the composition is organized overall in the aforementioned circumstances. The composition of building, with diagonal viewpoints and several focus points, originates in the late Baroque and early Enlightenment periods. The same can be said for the compositions by Ferdinando, "Galli da Bibiena" (Purini 2019; Mayor 1945), or the works from Piranesi's Prison. Most likely, the viewpoints created by Ferdinando "Galli da Bibiena" are direct descendants of the perspectives produced by Piazza del Popolo, which Domenico Fontana created in 1585–1590 in Rome for "Sisto V" in its current form. At the conclusion of the Baroque era, the composition of the space has been overcome, and the facade is no longer reliant solely on one focal point but rather has multiple focus points that direct the composition.

### 3 CASE STUDY: THE CITY OF DURRES, THE WORKS OF THE ARCHITECT KRISTO SOTIRI

Approximately 50 years of design work by architect Kristo Sotiri include the renovation of an Italian church, a monument in Romania, and an Albanian Mausoleum. He earned his engineering degree from the University of Padua in Italy in 1898. Then, in 1904, he finished his architectural studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, Italy. His activities outside of Albania, mostly in Italy and Romania, spanned the years 1905 to 1920, according to Miho [10 p.123]. There are several pieces that Kristo Sotiri constructed during this time. They cover a variety of functional typologies, from flats to casinos, and vary from the field of restoration to new construction. Kristo Sotiri has several initiatives that need to be validated on a global scale, but from unofficial sources<sup>1</sup>. These projects are mainly competition projects.

Maria Adriana Giusti, the author of the book "Albania: Architettura e città 1925-1943" (Firenze, 2006), has considered the architect in question as the highest authority in the field of Albanian architecture in the period between the two world wars. Many of the author's works, which we find unfolded mainly in Koco Miho's book, dedicated to Kristo Sotiri, have remained at the level of projects. According to Giusti, the reason for the non-realization of these projects must be sought in the fundamental political-cultural choices of the era. From these emerges the will to manage an organic and joint process for the construction of cities and the Albanian territory as a whole. The proposals of the architect for public constructions were not really preferred: some were too academic works, others were inspired by the "eclectic" style (at that time out of fashion) or by the survival of the "liberty" style or attempted modernists. This statement culminates in the case of the royal Villa of King Zog in the city of Durres. Sotiri makes the project and the work is constructed. Still, before being put into use, the object was demolished, for unclear reasons, and another project and work was carried out, which still exists today, as royal property.

Later, when he unexpectedly returns to Albania, his years of artistic maturation take place in the cities of Korca, Pogradec, Tirana, and Durres. The Martyrs Mausoleum, the Durres Royal House from 1926, and Vila Lule on the city's waterfront are among of his works in Durres City. The architect's conception of how to approach the façade stylistically has undergone significant evolution throughout the course of his years of production. The Venetian school's influence may be noticed in his early works' profuse use of ornament and arches. His design aesthetic changed over time. The façade of the architect's works evolved as modernity became closer, reflecting the actual style. They were stripped of the ornamentation, and just straight forms made of pure concrete were applied. To put the aforementioned ideas into concrete form, we shall discuss and evaluate one of the author's works below.

#### 3.1 Mausoleum of the Martyrs, Durres

*Mausoleum of the Martyrs, Durres.* The last work of the architect, the Mausoleum of the Martyrs, represented a novelty for the time. It is a one-of-a-kind, never-before-done piece of art for three reasons. First, in the case of this mausoleum, the martyrs' remains are kept in niches, or more precisely, in the interior wall facade of the building rather than deep underground. This is Albania's first vertical mausoleum, making it a unique and special case. The second reason is that, according to Miho [10], the architectural metaphor used, of the mother spreading her arms to embrace her children who fell in the war, unfolds in the middle of the city of

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<sup>1</sup> **International works from unofficial sources (from Revista Architettura Italiana):** Construction of the Large Bath Facility (Alberto Excelsior) in Lido, Venice, Italy (by competition); Ossuary Buildings in Lido, Venice, Italy (by competition); Some villas, in Lido, Venice, Italy (by competition); Palace of the Stock Exchange, Genoa (by competition); Grand Palace of Cupole, Genoa, Grand Palace of Cornice, Genoa; Cinema - Theater, Genoa; Ottoman glass, Constanta, Romania; Ottoman Bank, Cairo, Egypt.

that time, with a visual emphasis on the axis of the main street. This metaphor of a mother wrapping her children was used by Bernini and Pope Alexander VII for the colonnade of St. Peter's Square and was also a widespread metaphor at the end of the First World War in Italy as in the case of the main sculpture in the atrium and "la casa dei Mutilati" by Marcello Piacentini. This metaphor, which has its origins in the Spanish Baroque Concepts of the 17th century, constitutes the formal nucleus of the Museum. The third reason is that the building is completely bare of decorations, bas-reliefs, obelisks, sculptures, or monuments, unlike the cemeteries of martyrs in other cities. The Mausoleum of the Martyrs, built-in 1947, belongs to the period when modernism was flourishing in Europe, and we can say that, influenced by the Italian academic training of the author, it resembles the works of Italian-style modernism, with pure concrete material and without decor. The composition elements of the building facade are closely related to the structure, such as stairs and columns. In this work, we can find 4 of "the 5 principles of modern architecture by Le Corbusier": pilots raising the building from the ground; free plan, where the architect is free to adapt the interior walls as needed; - horizontal windows, extended along the entire length of the main front of the building; - free composition of the facade, now completely detached from the structure. The greenery on the terrace, contrary to the principles of Le Corbusier, has been applied to the ground floor, where the chambers of the martyrs are located.<sup>2</sup>

This work can be referred to the architectural style known as Italian Rationalism<sup>3</sup>, which emerged in Italy during the 1920s and 1930s. This movement, which followed the ideas of functionalism, was related to the International Modern Movement and persisted until the 1970s. The style of these works was significantly dissimilar from other architects'. Beginning with the European movement, the rationalists aimed to create a modern but also Italian architecture. To do this, they looked for traits that would endure over time, which they discovered in the impromptu buildings of the Mediterranean region, where they were active.

Here they examined the morphology, the rational use of materials in relation to the natural environment, and climate control techniques while learning about the values of old urban centers and indigenous communities. Abandoning the extremes of the avant-garde current recently, the Modern Movement reunited with tradition, recognizing its lessons, but revising them. The fascist-era structures achieve, in a natural way, the fundamental goals of the new Italian architecture of the time, which were functionality, minimalist adornment, the built-economy concept, and the logical use of materials.



Fig. 5 Mausoleum of the Martyrs (3d) (Bianka Madhi)

<sup>2</sup> **Works in the city of Durres:** Municipality of the city of Durres, (project); Mantha Jorgji's apartment; Residence Jovan Goga; Residence of the Kosova brothers; Residence of the Kalamishi brothers; Royal Villa of Durres, 1926; Vila Lule, Durres beach; Mausoleum of the Martyrs.

<sup>3</sup> In 1926 a group of architects from the Milan Polytechnic, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava, Giuseppe Terragni and Ubaldo Castagnoli, replaced the following year by Adalberto Libera, formed the "Seven Group", the group was officially constituted only in 1930, with the name MIAR (Italian Movement for Rational Architecture).

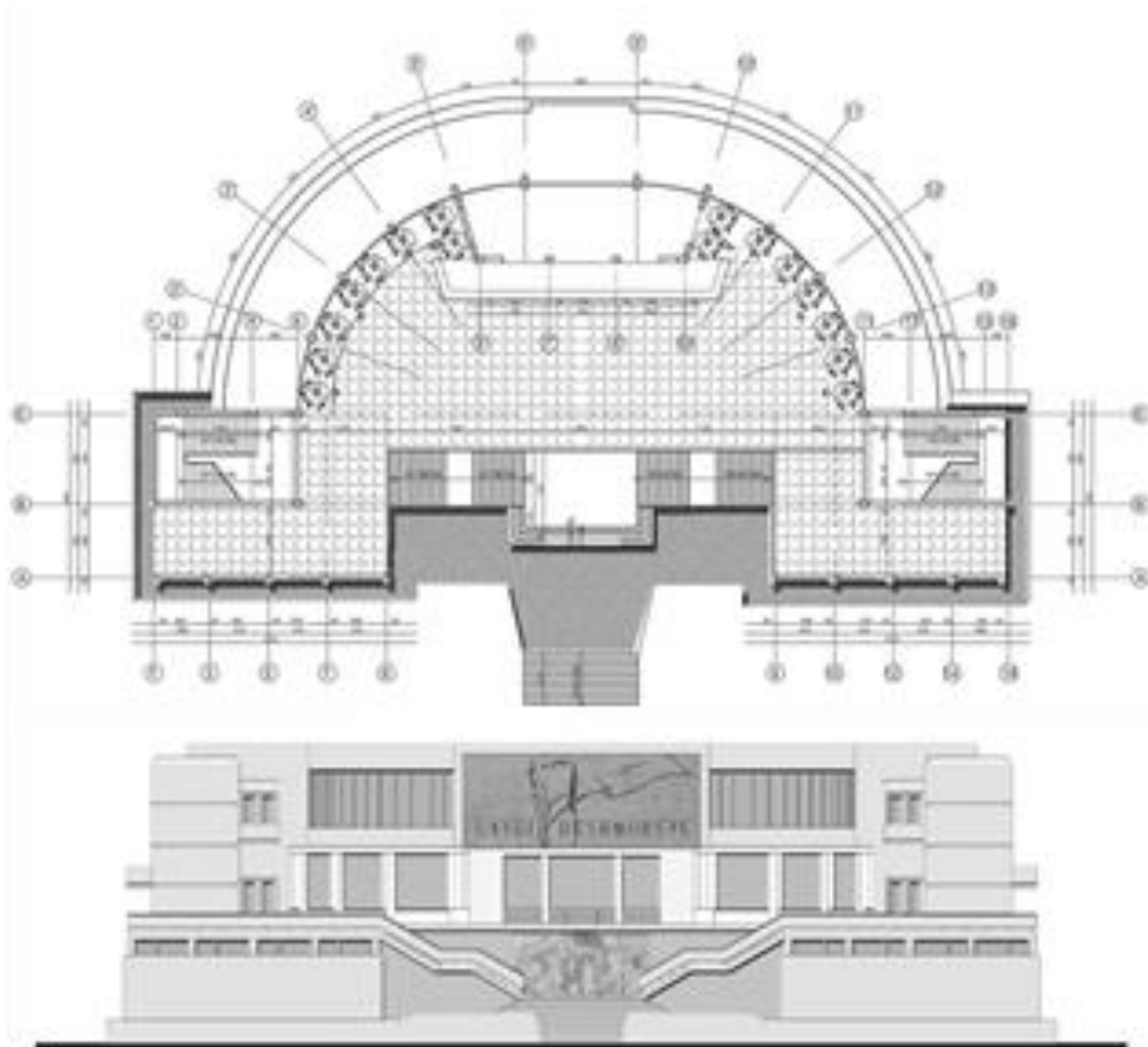


Fig. 6 Plan and Façade (B. Madhi). The figure shows the central composition of the Mausoleum of Martyrs. The two “arms” are the metaphor for the mother that embraces her children.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

At this point, following this detour that illustrates the connection between the exterior form and the internal form, it is obvious that the perspective, as a technique for depicting space, has directly influenced the composite facade components. Baroque architecture and Sant' Andrea's work in Mantua both illustrate this. The "rise" and "fall" of the perspective tool are reflected in the para-modern and Renaissance architectural styles. Between the facade and the inner form, there are at least two structural relations. The first structural relationship is **similarity**, when the façade and internal space have a comparable composition. The second structural relationship is **continuity**, between the interior and the facade in Baroque architecture. Here, we can once again underline the fact that this impact is much stronger in Baroque architecture and that the facade may end up being the most crucial component in the form's design. At this time, the space transforms from a flat, plastic element to a three-dimensional one. Modern architecture is when the façade element's downfall starts. This occurs as a result of axonometry, a new tool that replaces the central perspective as a tool for creating architectural form. The facade element "dies" and is "museified" in the 1980 Venice Biennale during the postmodern era.

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