



COLIN ROWE was an architect who made his mark through his ideas and writings rather than his built work. In 1995 he was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architecture's Gold Medal, only the second scholar this century to receive this honour. From the beginning, he seems to have inhabited an ideal landscape, that landscape where thought and feeling combine in an event. It is as if he faced the world the way the figures do in a Claude Lorraine painting, overwhelmed by the architectural constructions, yet not intimidated by them. His observations were best heard in front of the evidence, and, since his subject was architecture, that meant walking.

There was a period when the coincidence of Colin Rowe and Henry Russell Hitchcock meant prolonged walks through the city of London, extending into the small hours, examining the evidence as it presented itself to the eye. This immediacy had a lot to do with Rowe's appeal, and it is represented in both his writing and lecturing style as a characteristically conversational tone, as with most of the essays in his book *As I Was Saying* (1995). Rowe could force a photograph to give up its hidden qualities, to move before one's very eyes.

Colin Rowe was born in 1920 in Yorkshire, at Rotherham, but his accent was metropolitan. He won a scholarship to Liverpool University in 1939 to study at the School of Architecture, graduating in 1946 following war service. He continued his studies at the Warburg Institute in London under Rudolf Wittkower - his thesis was on the theoretical drawings of Inigo Jones - and spent a year on a Smith-Mundt/Fulbright Scholarship at Yale, studying with Henry Russell Hitchcock.

As a contemporary of Rowe's at Liverpool University, I succumbed to his charm at once, and found it difficult to throw it off. After he was invalided out of the Parachute Regiment in 1944 with a broken back we were students together, and after I returned from war service in India he was lecturing at the university and was my tutor for thesis. He was and remained my mentor, the one who awakened me, as so many others, to the excitement of the idea built.

Rowe was attracted by the openness of American society (he became an American citizen in 1984), and by the extraordinary effect this freer horizon had on architectural models imported from Europe. After his year at Yale, he travelled in the United States, working on a number of architectural projects before accepting a post in 1953 at the University of Texas at Austin.

During only five semesters when he taught there he not only revolutionised the teaching of architectural design by bringing in European models, but he alerted Americans to their own heritage by his praise for the city of Lockhart in Texas and generally, by pointing to the dynamic quality of American settlements, and the American revitalisation of the classical. It was his peculiar virtue to be able to imbue the present moment of creation with an excitement derived from past moments of creation, and students were often sent to the library to check out a plan of a Palladian villa before drawing up their plan for a secondary school.

Between 1958 and 1962 Rowe was a lecturer at Cambridge University, where among other things he became adviser to Peter Eisenman and encouraged him to study Terragni. Rowe's enthusiasm for the inherent contradictions within Italian Mannerism, allied to frequent trips to Italy, created something of a legend, and when he came to inhabit the Palazzo Massimi, during a spell running the Rome programme of Cornell University, it seemed perfectly appropriate, a personal apotheosis, even though his rooms were in the attic. From that eyrie he could hear the footsteps of the last scion of the family promenading in the salone. The Italian inheritance seemed like a prolonged and radiant sunset. Some warmth from Italian art may also have promoted his long friendship with the New York architect Judy de Maio.

Where Rowe had found Austin disruptive, he found Cambridge exasperating. In 1962 he returned to America, and from then on taught at Cornell University, except for prolonged visits to Italy which, by his own admission, made him more or less italianizzato. At Cornell his influence was directed at city planning, not in the direction of management, but of exploring that margin where city form and architectural form act together to create a sense of place and occasion. The current movement in new urban design is a direct result of the enthusiasm he inspired. In his half-basement room at Cornell, hemmed in by seemingly eternal snows, he confirmed his opinions through the books that surrounded him, and his erudition was based on an unerring sense of character, and hence of provenance.

Rowe will be remembered for his conversations as much as for his writings, which nevertheless, through the good offices of his editor, Alex Caragone, form in the end a considerable corpus, committed to paper only in his final years. His life was bent on the discoveries that come only through close reading; he did not pursue a career.

A master of hermeneutics, he thought nothing of cultural studies and preferred to ignore "the whole semiology thing". His first essay, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" (first published in the *Architectural Review*, 1947), was in some ways his best, but all his essays were tremendous in showing how modern architecture can be understood through the subtleties of form that it employs. In this way he established a crucial continuity in architectural culture.

Colin Frederick Rowe, architectural educator and critic: born Rotherham, Yorkshire 27 March 1920; Lecturer, University of Texas, Austin 1953-56; Lecturer, Cambridge University, 1958-62; Professor of Architecture, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Design, Cornell University 1962-85, Andrew Dickson White Professor in Architecture 1985-90 (Emeritus); died Washington DC 5 November 1999. —Robert Maxwell