

Winter 2004 MST 20C
Professor Roddy

Leon Battista Alberti Describes to Giovanni Rucellai his Plans for the Reconstruction of the Palazzo Rucellai, Florence (1453)

To you, my noble patron, Giovanni Rucellai, I Leon Battista Alberti send my greetings and good tidings.

source?

My most noble patron, you are a true noble lord gifted in with both health and riches. You have been blessed with good health such as you have never spent a day in bed

(Borsi, 59). With your good luck in the business of commerce and exchange you have brought yourself riches, honor, and prestige (Borsi, 59). Without this generous wealth you

explain

would not be able to honor yourself, your family or your city (Jarzombek, 152). Your abilities do not end with just making money. You have faithfully served in the

ORASS

diplomatic?

Common

government where you too great care not to make any mistakes is also worthy of note

(Borsi, 59). I am honored that a man of your noble stature has chosen me to plan for the reconstruction of the Palazzo Rucellai. In me, you must have seen the qualities that make

source?

a truly great architect. In my youth I was adept at both physical and intellectual exercises such as horsemanship, running, grammar, and math (Godfrey, 163). I studied law in both

Secure his good will.

Padua, and Bologna, and have lived in Florence, Rome and many other smaller courts in Italy (Godfrey, 163). Additionally I believe that artists and architects should only deal

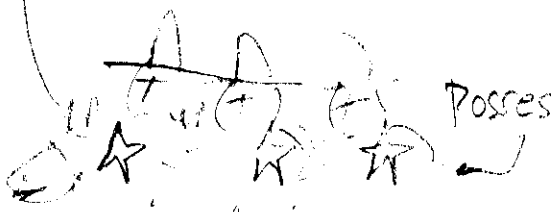
with those of the highest rank and quality (Jarzombek, 157). You, Giovanni Rucellai know of these diverse qualities and skills I possess, and know that with these skills I shall design

for you, a palace that shall embody your family's magnificence.

A palace for a man of your stature should provide protection, and be made up of living, office and warehouse space in order to properly run your business from the city center of Florence (Yarwood, 65). All this interior space is well and good, but it is the

"govern"

warden



source: public nature of architecture

exterior space that I will take great care to craft. The façades of the major building, both private and public should speak to the average person who is walking by (Grafton, 182).

The façades of the Palazzo Rucellai will be viewed constantly by the community of Florence. In the ~~community~~^{their} eyes, they shall see the legacy of your power and wisdom embodied in the façade of your palace (Borsi, 59). The façade's true gracefulness and beauty can only truly be appreciated if the design strives to imitate nature.

Why do we face it like this? the facade is the main thing

The imitation of nature is important, because for me a building is nothing more than an organic form (Gadol, 104). Only in the imitation of nature can true beauty be found. This organic form of a building, is much akin to a body, for it has the same relational and rational parts a body has (Gadol, 104). Additionally the form of the building

has a proportional arrangement of its material parts (Gadol, 104), much like the human body has its parts in proportion to each other, creating beauty. Beauty is the harmony of all the parts in whatever subject it appears in, fitted together with purpose and connection that any change in it would be for the worse (Gadol 106). That is to say, the three ideas that work to fit the building together are the concepts of numbers, measures and

details?

arrangements, working together to make Harmony (Gadol, 108). Taking this into consideration, in building the façade I will make it three stories tall, with a simple rectangular front (Stokstad, 655), this coherence will bring the building together in

source? ancient?

harmony. There is also a hierarchy of orders found in all great architecture. These orders from ancient times are Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian (Stokstad, 655). These orders will be adapted to the façade of the palazzo, as architects of old have done to their buildings. On the ground floor there will be Doric, Ionic on the second and Corinthian on the upper floor (Gadol, 129). In building the palazzo with such symmetry and

relate to Rucellai

Opposition

good, but watch modern language

good

symmetry and

proportions, I will achieve a beautiful structure that not only you, but the whole of Florence will appreciate.

These graceful proportions that I will use to build your palazzo can be found in the writings and structures of ancient times. A building from ancient Rome that aided me in the design of the façade was the Grand Coliseum in Rome. Inspired by the design and symmetry of the Coliseum, I have patterned pilasters on the façade (Stokstad 655). These

pilasters will remind people the great columns of the Coliseum and that greatness will transcend into your building. However, my architecture does not merely rest on the study of monuments, but also on close reading of ancient texts (Grafton 231). I have read

much about Vitruvius Polio, a man who commented on the buildings of ancient times. In book three he states that in building a temple, careful attention must be paid to the symmetry, and without symmetry or proportion, there can be no relation in the parts

(Polio, 3.1.1). Temples were built with great care and beauty because of their importance in the everyday lives of the people who prayed at them. The architectural ideas stemming from the building of a temple can be adapted to the building of the palazzo. These will

inspire awe from not only those who wish to do business with you, but the common man also. The double windows under round arches will be reminiscent of those found on the

Palazzo Medici (Stokstad 655). It is good to imitate parts of the Palazzo Medici, for they are vastly powerful, and is a family who you serve both nobly and unquestioningly.

The design of the Palazzo Rucellai will not only bring fame and fortune to your family, but it will glorify the city of Florence itself. When people come to the magnificent city of Florence, they will be drawn to the harmonic beauty of the Palazzo Rucellai. With this letter I have sent a model of the design for your approval. These models are

TRANSITION

Rome?

explain

good

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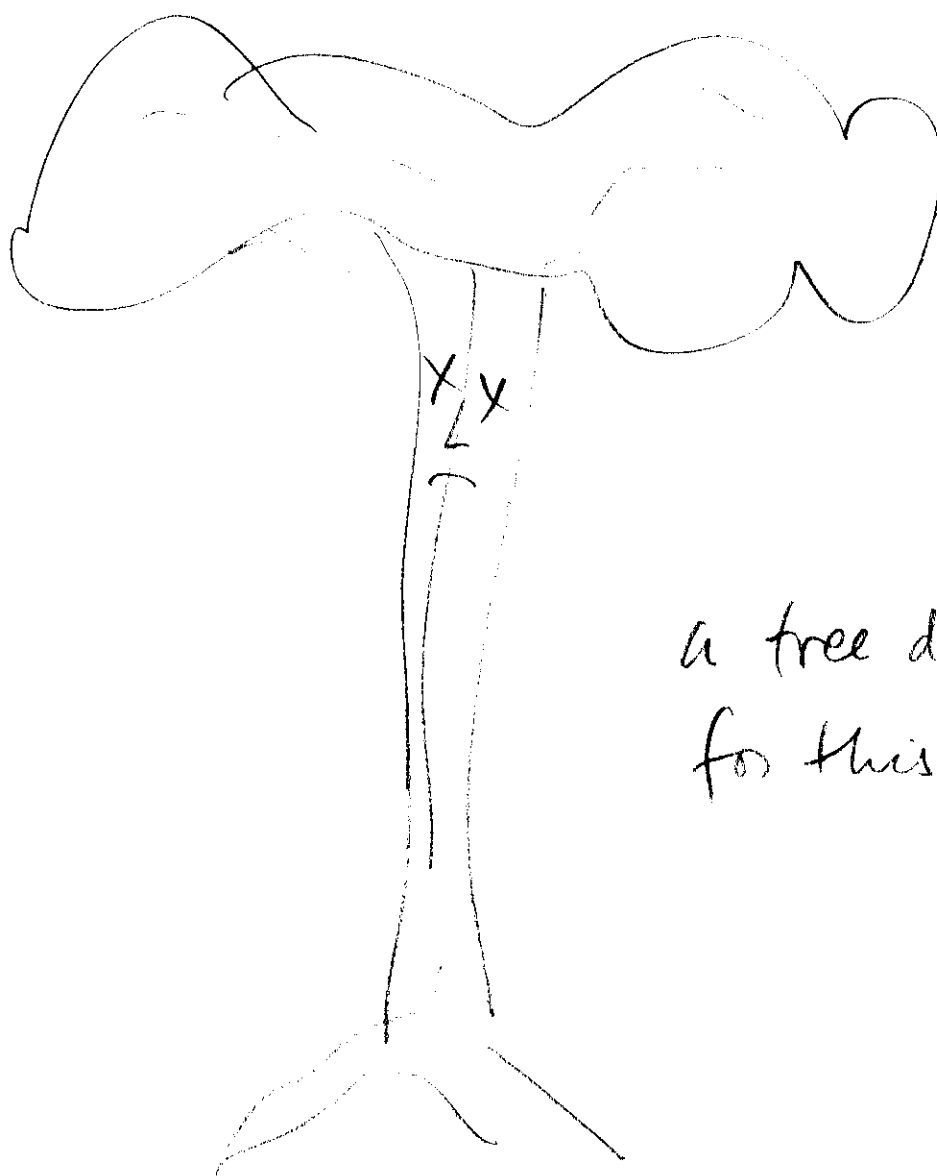
modern

do you want this?

loyally?

harmonious?

indispensable for the precise ordering, structure, and decoration of the building (Borsi, 67). I eagerly await your response to my design.



a tree died
for this page

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good job