

The Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio

in collaboration with:

Fondazione Canova

Stiftung Bibliothek Werner Oechslin

presents the exhibition:

Jefferson and Palladio

Constructing a New World

Palladio Museum, Vicenza, 23 September 2015 - 28 March 2016

Press preview: 19 September

Official opening: 23 September, 6 pm

Visitors are introduced to the exhibition by a mirror reflecting the busts of Palladio and Thomas Jefferson. This raises the initial question in the show: how are forms and ideas “reflected”? Why, in this case, was an architect from a province in Northern Italy adopted as a model for the construction of the architecture of the New World?

The answer is linked to another fundamental question: what is Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the man who drafted the Declaration of Independence and was the third president of the United States, doing in a museum of architecture? The reason is that he more than any other American shaped the face of the new nation through art, architecture and regional planning. Visionary but also pragmatic, he was both a man of action and an intellectual who knew Latin and Greek. And he was convinced that the New World could only be built through reason and beauty.

Think of aerial views of the American countryside and cities, divided into regular squares. Jefferson was responsible for this: he adopted a grid based on meridians and parallels, inspired by the ancient Romans. Or think of the White House, with its columned portico like a Palladian villa. Jefferson had actually wanted to make an enlarged copy of the Villa La Rotonda in Vicenza, and in any event the house of the President of the new United States, forged in a bloody war against a monarchy, had to be inspired by Republican architecture, as the Republic of Venice was.

Jefferson and Palladio. Constructing a New World is the first-ever exhibition dedicated to the great American Palladian in Europe. It will enable visitors to explore Jefferson's world, his art collections, architectural designs, dreams, and also his contradictions, through drawings, sculptures, precious books, architectural models, films and multimedia. The exhibition also features 36 photographs by Filippo Romano,

the result of a photographic survey specifically conducted in Virginia in Spring 2014. There are also three precious original *bozzetti* (models) by Antonio Canova for a statue of George Washington, commissioned by Thomas Jefferson.

Visitors can enhance their experience of the exhibition by downloading a free smartphone app with descriptions by the curators and so move through the rooms accompanied by their words.

More than simply a display of architecture, the exhibition is primarily about a man who was convinced that architecture could improve the world around him. He began studying it in books and then visited many buildings during his long stay in Europe as United States ambassador in Paris. He built two mansions for himself and many others for friends. With his project for the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, he established a model for the architecture of American civil power. In the last years of his life, he created a prototype campus at the University of Virginia: an open architecture with the classrooms in self-contained pavilions facing each other, together with the student houses, around lawns, crowned by a monumental library in the form of the Pantheon. His idea of community was combined with his vision that culture was the ground on which to construct the new United States of America.

For Jefferson, Palladio was the “Bible”. He called his own mansion Monticello because in Palladio’s *Quattro Libri* he had read in Italian that La Rotonda stood on a “*monticello*” (hillock). Jefferson admired Palladio as the designer who had translated the great ancient Roman architecture for the purposes of the modern world. But most importantly Palladio had created the “villa”, a country residence for gentlemen (whether in the Veneto, England or America) who pursued their interests on their estates, where they could enjoy a healthy natural life and cultivate the spirit by reading the classics.

But mirrors can also distort. Unlike Palladio's patrons and their subsequent British counterparts, American landowners employed slaves to work their on farms. Jefferson himself owned around one hundred. Three unalienable rights that Jefferson acknowledged in the Declaration of Independence were for whites only: “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”.

Dedicated to the memory of Mario Valmarana, the still greatly cherished professor at the University of Virginia who devoted his life to creating bridges between Palladio’s Veneto and Jefferson’s Virginia, the exhibition has been made possible thanks to the support of the Regione del Veneto and the Fondazione Cariverona, and is the result of collaboration with the Fondazione Canova di Possagno and the Stiftung Bibliothek Werner Oechslin, Einsiedeln, Switzerland. The exhibition is also part of a joint project developed with the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, which in October

2014 staged the photographic exhibition *Found in Translation: Palladio-Jefferson. A narrative by Filippo Romano*.

The exhibition has been curated by Guido Beltramini and Fulvio Lenzo, with the support of an Advisory Committee, chaired by Howard Burns (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa), and composed of James Ackerman (Harvard University), Bruce Boucher (University of Virginia), Travis C. McDonald (Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest), Damiana Paternò (IUAV, Venice), Mario Piana (IUAV, Venice), and Craig Reynolds (University of Virginia). The catalogue (available in English or Italian) is published by Officina Libraria.

The exhibition layout has been designed by Alessandro Scandurra.

Information

Open Monday to Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Tickets: 10 euros / concessions 7 euros / schools 4 euros / families 12 euros.

<http://www.palladiomuseum.org/exhibitions/jefferson>

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