

# International Research Center for Centro di Architettura "Andrea Palladio"

Vicenza, Italy

Dan Shepperd

Critics: Gene Ernst  
Dale Bryant  
Richard Longstreth

*My direction is clear: traditionalism. This is not academic revival; there are no classic orders in my work, no Gothic finials. I try to pick up what I like throughout history. We cannot not know history.*

*Sullivan said that form follows function. Of course it doesn't. Form follows ideas in people's minds, if they get strong enough to come out.*

*Philip Johnson, Writings*

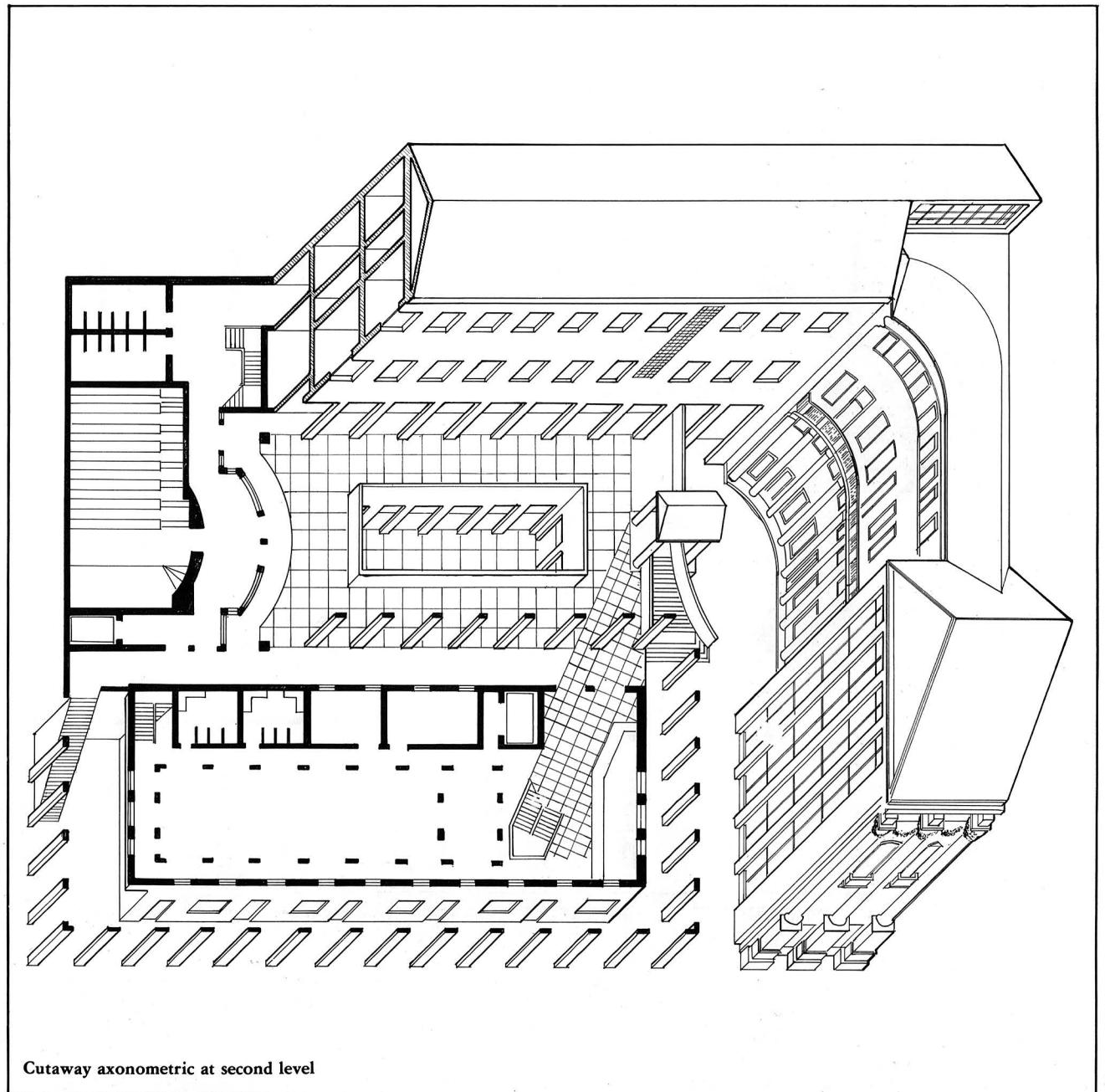
## Background

The medieval Center of Vicenza is dense, compacted by natural boundaries: the Retrone River to the south, the Bacchiglione River to the north, and the mountains to the west. The city center is bisected by the Corso Andrea Palladio, on an approximately east-west axis, along which lie a series of piazzas. Most of the city's monuments and civic buildings are located on or near these squares.

The project entails a large addition to Palladio's Palazzo Porte-Breganze. Begun after the architect's death under the supervision of Vincenzo Scamozzi, only a fragment of the design was realized. The site allows a new building to become the major focus of the Piazza del Castello, the first of the old city's square when entering from the west. The project seeks to enhance definition of the piazza, while articulating the transition between this space and the adjacent Piazza Duomo.

## Program

The program developed includes retail commercial spaces at the ground level, with quarters for the Centro di Architettura "Andrea



Cutaway axonometric at second level

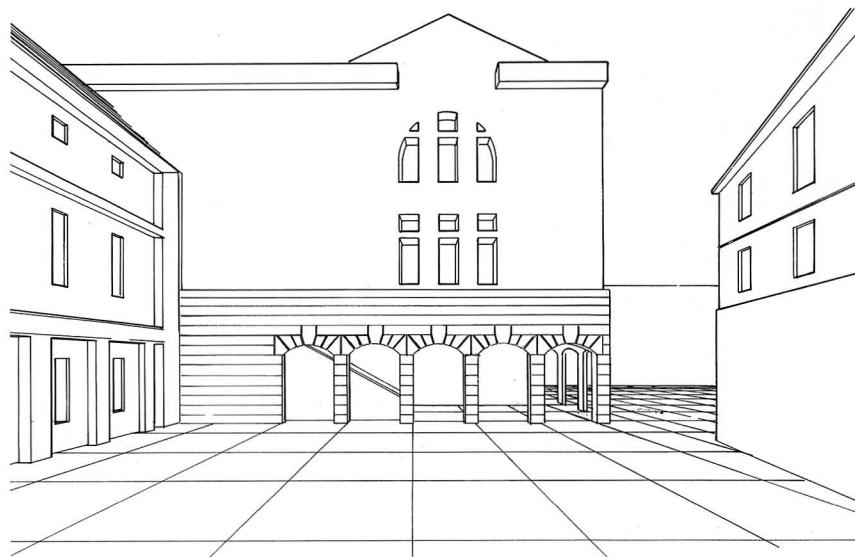
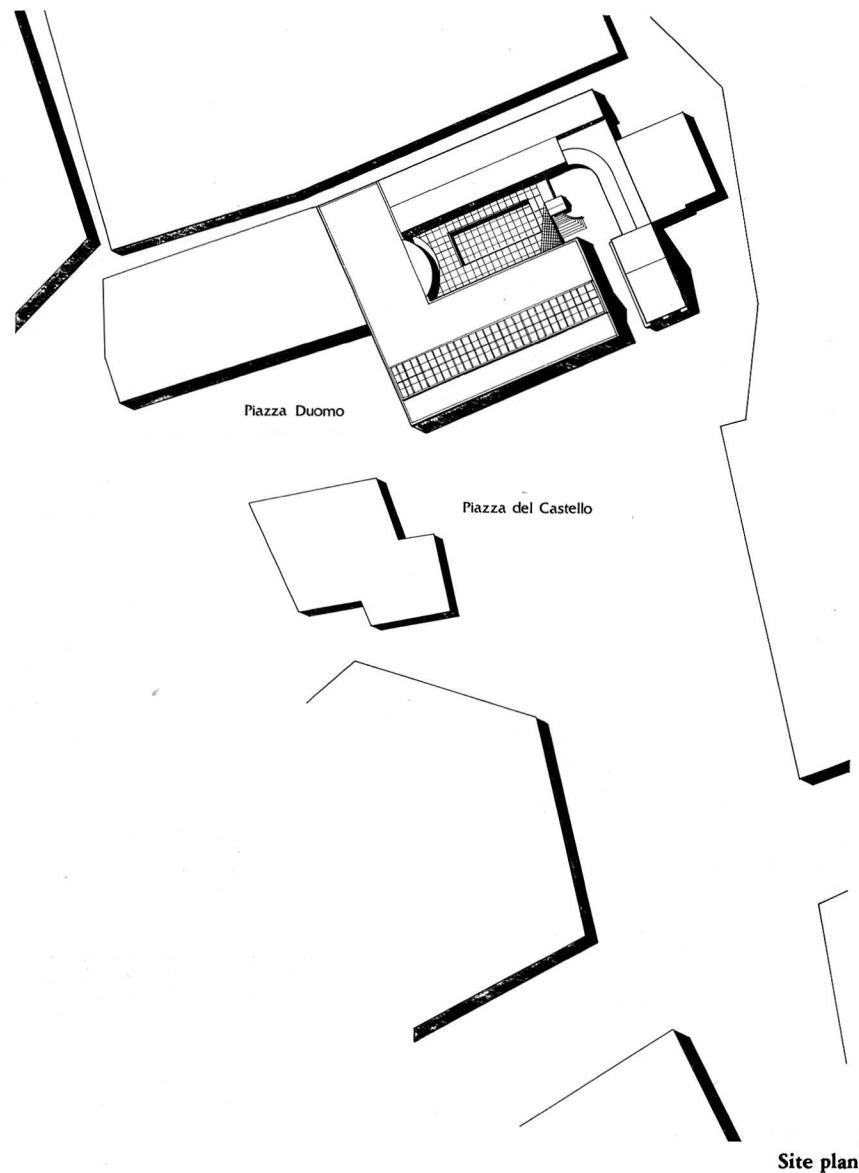
Palladio'' above.

This research center consists of a public art gallery (to be located primarily in the palladian fragment), a library with a large collection of material on Palladio and Italian architecture, workshops and storage spaces for both facilities, classrooms, a lecture hall, offices for resident historians, and living accommodations for visiting scholars.

#### Solution

Giuseppe Terragni's concern for "sincerity, order, logic, and clarity above all" served as a guide for the abstract qualities of the design. At the same time, the scheme seeks to make specific and obscure references to a variety of historical precedents. The basic site organization recalls the loose grouping of activities around a courtyard inherent in small market squares. The library interior recalls an Early Christian basilica. The void between the Palladian fragment and the new building creates a canyon-like street, common throughout Italian cities. The elevation seen from Piazza Duomo is influenced by the imaginary architecture found in De Chirico paintings, made more specific by a window detail derived from Palladio's Villa, Malcontenta.

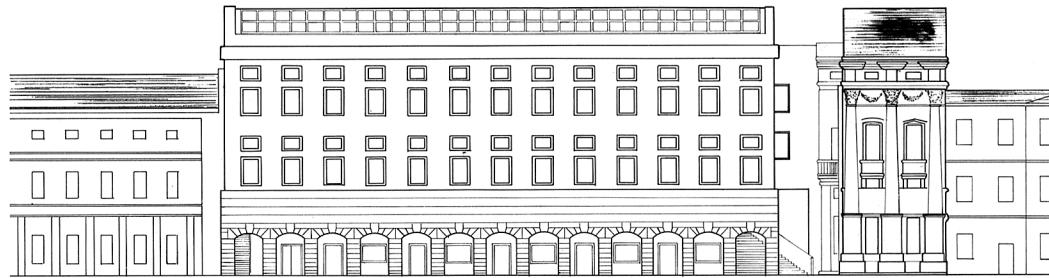
The primary device used to give visual order to the Centro's diverse activities is a courtyard divided into several zones. The spatial sequence also allows transition from public to private areas, both between the piazza and the Centro, and within the Centro itself. A secondary device used for spatial organization is the linear alignment of rooms along a passageway. As a plan element, the linear loft space first appears as the stoa, a Greek elaboration of the fundamental cell, the megaron. It recurs throughout architectural history as a flexible element applicable to diverse uses and contexts. Here, this repetitive plan element is layered horizontally and stacked vertically throughout the project. The result is a strong sense of clarity in plan and organization. The



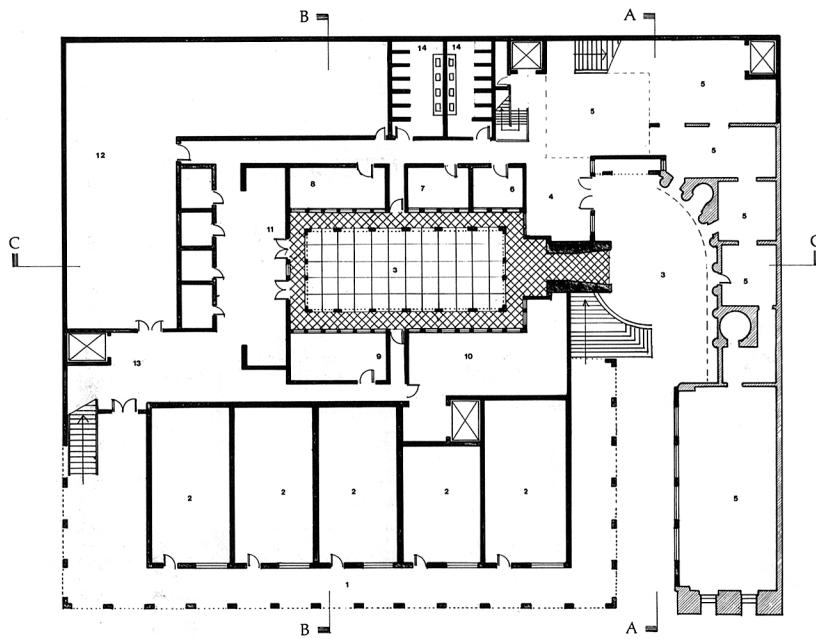
repetitive rhythm is modulated to articulate separate zones and activities. The arcade serves a dual role. At street level, it allows the piazza to penetrate the site. Repeating the arcade form around the courtyard provides a consistent element throughout the project, and integrates the various activities.

The internal organization is divided into three zones. At ground level are the public spaces — art gallery and shops — as well as service and storage facilities. The second level includes the Centro's principal research and administrative spaces, organized around the courtyard. The upper floors contain more private spaces: study carrels, library stacks, offices, and living accommodations.

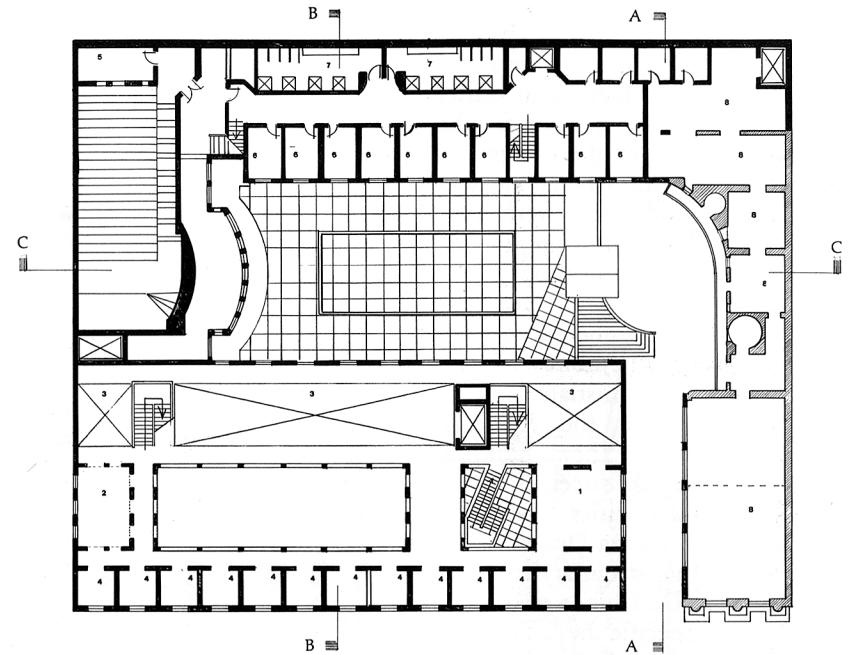
The desire for visual clarity in the project led to a reductionist approach for creating a dialogue between the palazzo and the addition. The new complex embodies a concern for the scale, height, proportions and rhythm of Palladio's fragment without duplicating them. At the same time, the ornate modelled surfaces of the palazzo are in sharp contrast to the austere planar surfaces of the addition. Tension is established by the void between the two parts — a tight passage from the piazza to the Centro's entrances. The contrast seeks to increase the significance and prominence of a comparatively small historic building, addressing a larger physical context.



North elevation

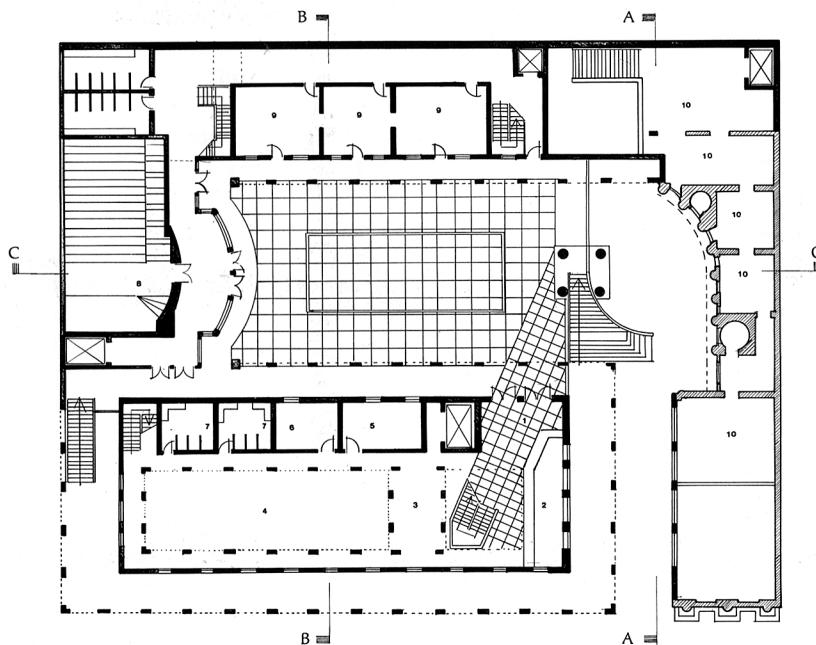


Ground level



Third level

Second level



Fourth level

