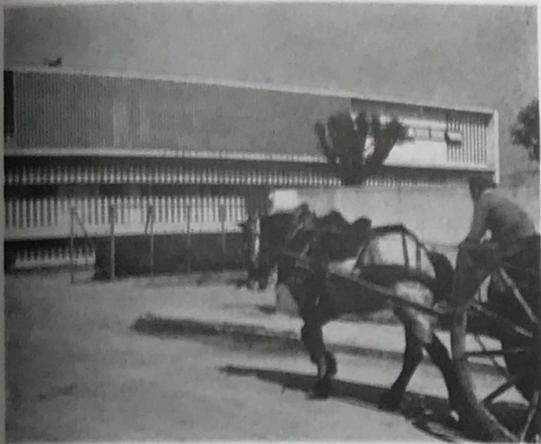


ITALY BUILDS

A new book by G. E. Kidder Smith



Tuberculosis Clinic, Alessandria
Ignazio Gardella

"what too few Italian architects perceive—
the wonderful lessons of the native
architecture. The open brick grille . . .
inspired by traditional vented walls."

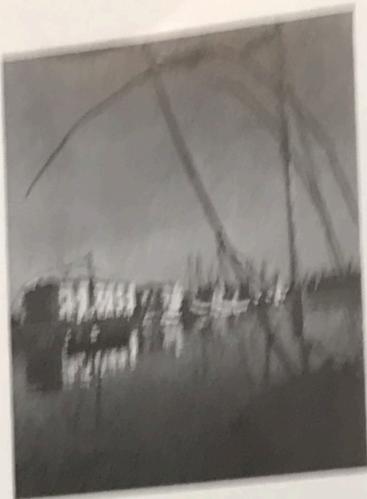
L'ITALIA COSTRUISCE

Architecture for Kidder Smith begins with the land, the climate, the people. It is not an isolated phenomenon but in its best manifestations, as deeply rooted as an oak in the natural and historical inheritance of the land it enhances. This is the message of his monumental new book, *Italy Builds*, just published by Reinhold, New York. The approach is as scholarly as the photographs are beautiful. The author is an architect and also a superb photographer, as readers of his *Sweden Builds*, *Switzerland Builds*, and *Brazil Builds* already know.

He starts with the land and the types of native architecture each region has produced. Then, as part of the inheritance, the urban setting. By far the best, and the unique section of the book is Kidder Smith's sensitive analysis of city squares. With plans, sections and progressive photographs he tries—and succeeds as far as is humanly possible in two dimensions, to recreate the esthetic experience of the square—of St. Peter's in Rome, San Marco in Venice, the tiny Piazza Umberto I in Capri. Another aspect of the city which he examines is changes in urban levels. One of the most fascinating layouts is a diagram of the "virtual ultimate . . . (in) the pleasures and excitements produced by skilfully created changes in urban levels"—the hundred and thirty-seven steps of the Piazza di Spagna, Rome. As well as the front and air view, little snapshots re-create on the page the pleasurable experience of *using* the stairs. With this foundation, the final section on the modern architecture of Italy comes as a slight anticlimax, even though the book has been criticized for showing only the peaks and none of the rubble—for in Italy there is little mediocre and the bad is really disastrous. But Kidder Smith is in love with Italy, and has made a book to be drawn from on many levels, as well as to be looked at and enjoyed.

—M.S.

"a soaring scalloped shell . . . hovers like an umbrella
over its seventy-five foot span . . . a series of closely spaced
prefabricated reinforced tile area formed a nearly
solid formwork for the concrete finish. It is interesting to
recall . . . the pottery dome of San Vitale at Ravenna,



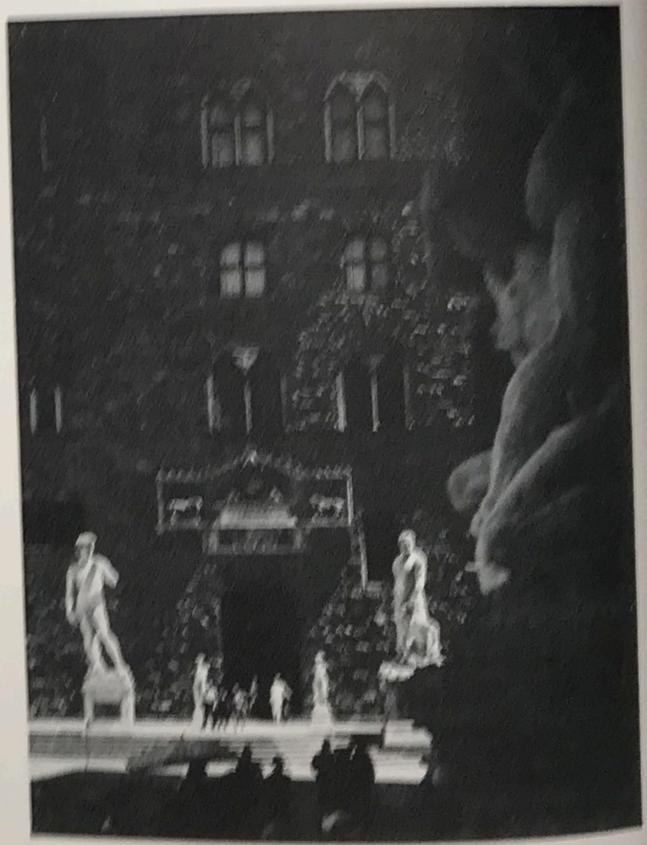
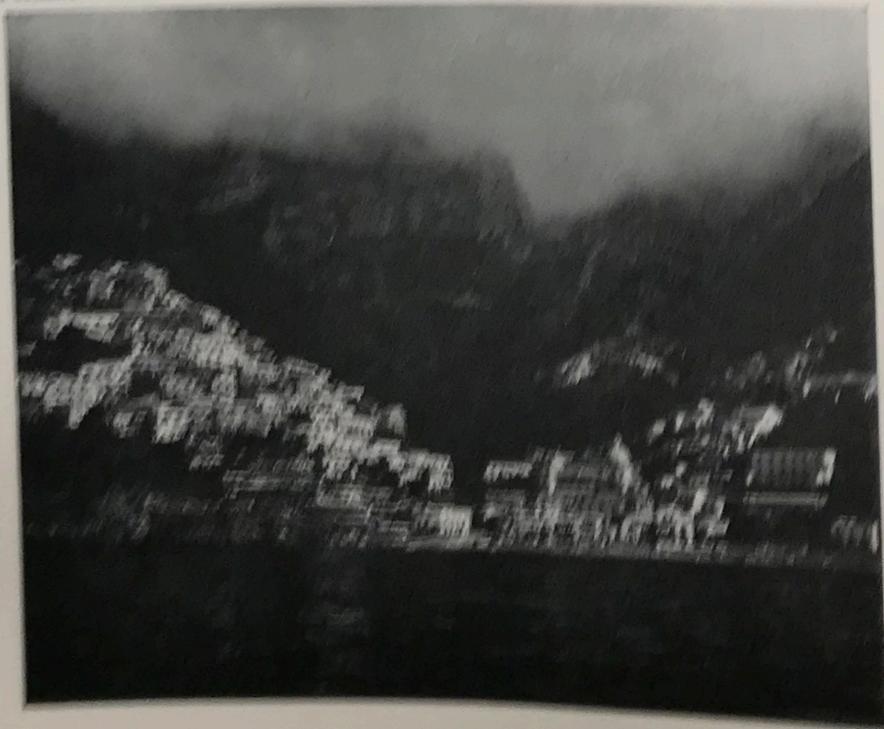
Fishing boats, Rimini
"an integration of man and landscape"

Farmhouse, Città della Pieve (Umbria)
"a strong feeling for shapes and forms
and landscape . . . logically divided
into small separate units . . . dominated . . .
by the central residence."

Cathedral, Orvieto

The Inheritance: land and architecture

Positano



Piazza della Signoria, Florence

The message of Kidder Smith's book, as he repeatedly states, is not that these examples should be used as models, but only as ideas for contemplation. The land at Positano, for example, has not been bulldozed; the village climbs in harmony with its rugged backdrop and tiny harbor. Its sculptural houses face the sun; their limestone and plaster roofs last generations where tarpaper under the same conditions would have crumbled. Into the inheritance of Italy's architecture go the forms of the land and the building which has quite naturally adapted to it. The best building of the past is ever present: the secular open square of Florence with its traditional unity of sculpture and architecture, and the ecclesiastical square of Orvieto, which exists around and for the glorification of its cathedral.

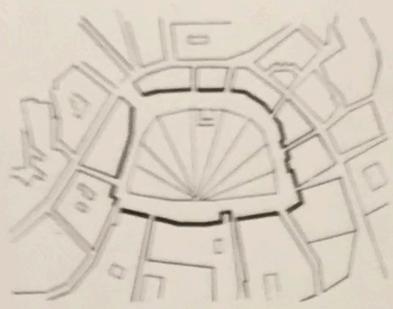


Fountain. One of the
a group of buildings
and landscape.
into small groups
by the central fountain.



... della Piazza, Firenze
... of Elder S...
... in the town
... for example
... in the
... and there
... of the
... and the building
... of the
... of the

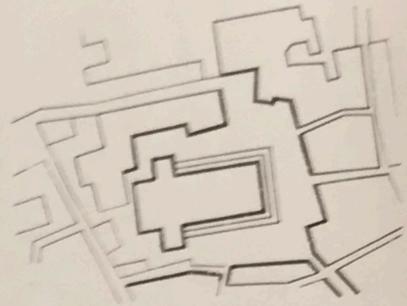
In a fascinatingly faceted analysis, the town square is presented as a—sometimes spontaneous—exercise in total architecture: as a core of city life for the use of traffic, as a breathing space, as a unifying element which joins buildings, sculpture and site, as an esthetic experience of forms and space, and as an endless human theater whose function—and lesson—is pleasure.



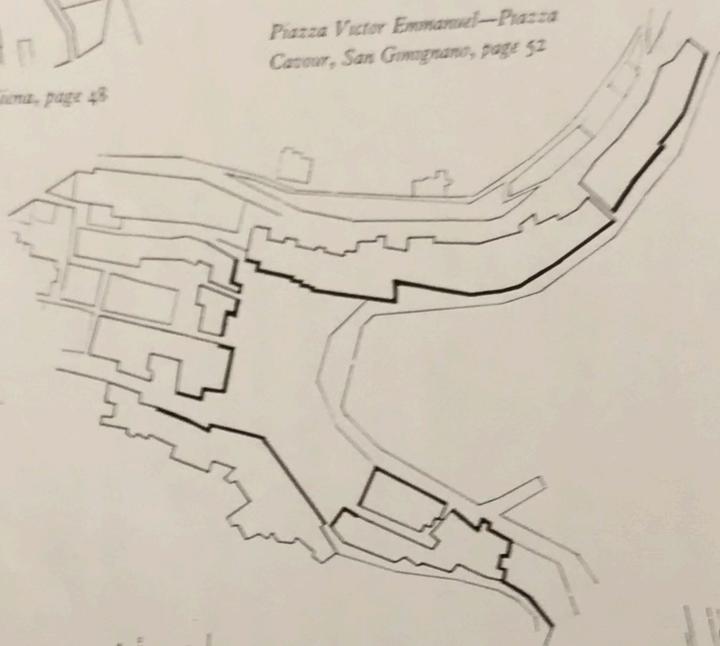
Piazza del Campo, Siena, page 48



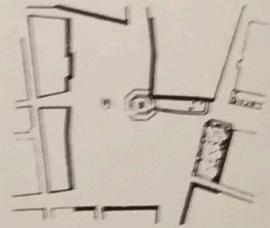
Piazza Victor Emmanuel—Piazza Capoue, San Gimignano, page 52



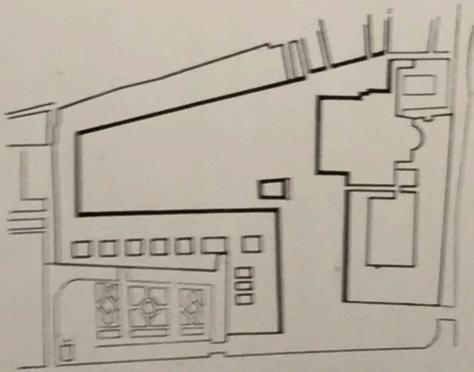
Piazza del Duomo, Orvieto, page 56



Piazza Umberto I, Capri, page 60

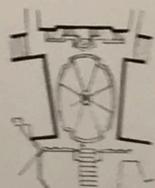


Piazza Signoria, Florence, page 66

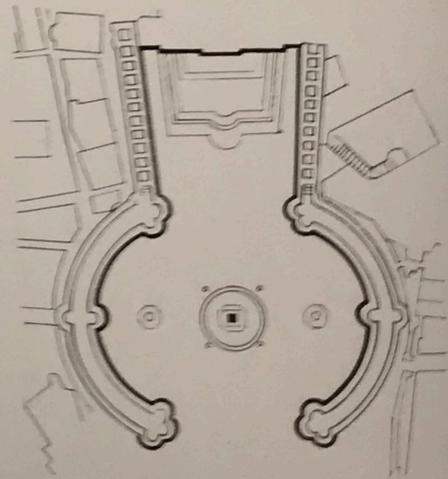


Piazza San Marco, Venice, page 70

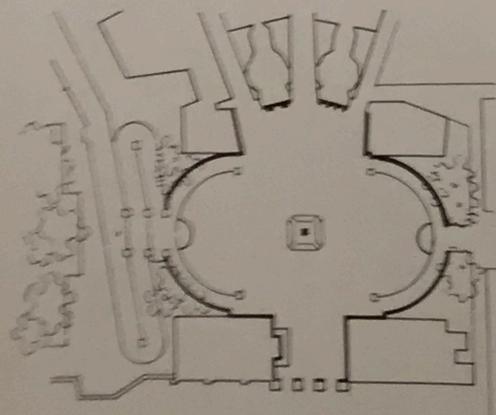
Portofino, page 62



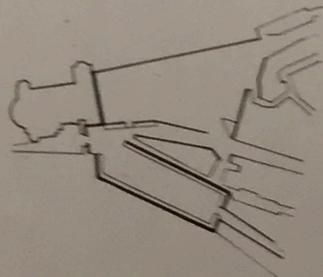
Il Campidoglio, Rome, page 80



Piazza San Pietro, Rome, page 84



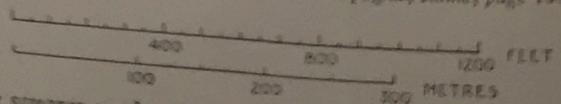
Piazza del Popolo, Rome, page 90



San Francesco, Assisi, page 98



Piazza di Spagna, Rome, page 100

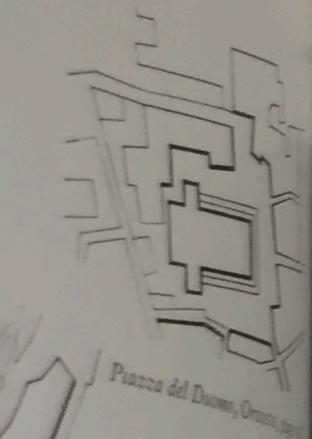


Comparative simplified plans, all drawn to the same scale, of the squares analysed in this book.
Piante comparative semplificate, tutte disegnate nella stessa scala, delle piazze analizzate in questo libro.

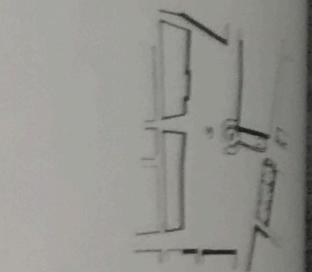
exercise in total
joins buildings, and
lose function—and

Cities and squares

Piazza del Campo, Siena



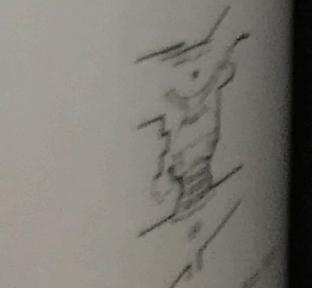
Piazza del Duomo, Siena



Piazza S. Maria, Siena



Piazza San Pietro, Siena





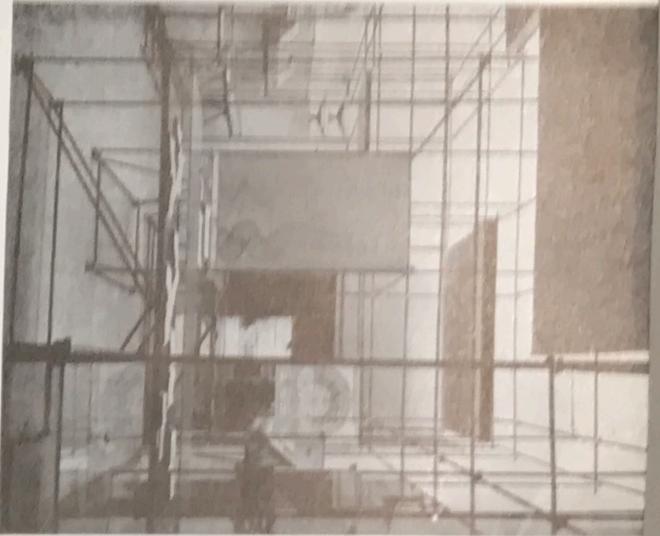
Architecture of Italy

100

Apartment Hotel, Via Corridoni, Milan
Luigi Moretti

"above the architectural rabble and rubble . . . a clean unflinching statement too little seen . . . Two identical abutting buildings . . . visually subdivided at the short end by the strongly expressed vertical line of the halls and their windows instead of a ponderous mass."

Sala "C"
Exhibition Hall,
Turin
Pier Luigi Nervi
"Nervi makes concrete
the direct expression
of his analytical mind.
The poetry . . . stems
with its grace. The
two lowest rows of
(architectural) diamonds
are open, and admit a
kind flood of light . . .
making the solid roof
float on air"



Proportions Exhibition, 9th Triennale, Milan
Francesco Gaebochi (with Carla Marzoli)

Photostated . . . Panels give an immediacy and . . . suppress to a certain degree the tendency of such cage exhibitions to become by their very mechanics more important than the objects shown . . . To make more realistic the message all measures are . . . from the Golden Section."

Sala "C"
Exhibition Hall,
Turin
Pier Luigi Nervi

"Nervi makes concrete the direct expression of his analytical mind. The poetry . . . stems with its grace. The two lowest rows of (prefabricated) diamonds are open, and admit a soft band of light . . . making the solid roof float on air."

