



Project of Crisis: Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture (Writing Architecture)

By Marco Biraghi

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The influential Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri (1935--1994) invoked the productive possibilities of crisis, writing that history is a "project of crisis" (*progetto di crisi*). In this entry in the Writing Architecture series, Marco Biraghi explores Tafuri's multifaceted and often knotty oeuvre, using the historian's concept of a project of crisis as a lens through which to examine his historical construction of contemporary architecture.

Mindful of Tafuri's statement that there is no such thing as criticism, only history, Biraghi carefully maps the influences on Tafuri's writing -- Walter Benjamin, Karl Krauss, Massimo Cacciari, and the architect Ludovico Quaroni, among others -- in order to create a portrait of one of the most complex minds in twentieth-century architecture and architectural history. Tracing an arc from Tafuri's first articles in the magazine *Contropiano* to the idea of contradiction at the center of the project of crisis, Biraghi cites Tafuri's writing on some of his contemporaries, including Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, Robert Venturi, Aldo Rossi, and the "Five Architects" (Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier). Tafuri's historical construction of the contemporary, Biraghi explains, is based on the idea that the past is open, providing the present with ever-changing and indeterminate form. There is no contradiction between Tafuri the historian and Tafuri the contemporary critic, only the greatest possible integration. The importance of Tafuri's interpretation of architecture goes beyond mere academic or historiographic interest, Biraghi argues; Tafuri's notion of the project of crisis is fundamentally important in understanding our present-day architectural condition

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About the Author

Marco Biraghi is Associate Professor of the History of Contemporary Architecture at Milan Polytechnic University.

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