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**[Re]making History**

Authenticity, Architecture, and Tourism

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# [Re]making History: Authenticity, Architecture, and Tourism

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*Abstract: To assess how architectural landmarks create a more authentic experience for tourists by using themes of place-making, phenomenology, dark tourism, and identity, we discuss three famous sites -- two museums and a cemetery - in the cities of Venice and Verona in Italy, designed by Italian architect Carlo Scarpa. The two museums are Querini Stampalia, previously a private residence, and Castelvecchio, an old castle. The third site is Brion Cemetery, located on the outskirts of Verona. Using qualitative methods of on-site observations and an analysis of professional photographs taken at each site, we test if these three buildings perpetuate Wang's three types of authenticity: objective, constructive, and existential, as postulated in his paper "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience" (1999). We find that each site validates one or more of Wang's authenticity types by employing a variety of architectural interventions to create transformative experiences for tourists. Each intervention is discussed in detail, bringing up key questions and issues vital to the improvement of existing or the creation of new architectural tourist sites by decision-makers. The study helps develop a better understanding of how architecture perpetuates authenticity, a significant aspect of tourism discourse that is often overlooked.*

*Keywords: Heritage, Architectural Intervention*

## Introduction

Authenticity in architecture and tourism has been analyzed by scholars and experts from various perspectives and in different contexts to understand the behavior of visitors in liminal spaces (Krösbacher & Mazanec 2010). In a quest for authenticity, tourists travel to foreign destinations in order to encounter heritage environments and landmarks. These locations present opportunities for experiential transformation via architectural intervention. The creator of this built form has, for many centuries, been an architect. We discuss sites designed by well-known Italian architect Carlo Scarpa in order to assess whether his architecture has elicited change, specifically one that creates a more authentic tourist experience. Three famous landmarks form the basis for this study—two museums and one cemetery built by Scarpa in the cities of Venice and Verona in Italy. The museums include Querini Stampalia, a private residence converted into a museum building, and Castelvecchio, a museum that was made from the ruins of a castle. The Brion Cemetery lies just outside of Verona, a site that has been largely ignored as a tourist destination over the years. Extensive alterations and attention to detail by Scarpa at these sites have been keys to their success as architectural icons with the potential to become popular tourist destinations. Further, due to their close proximity to one another and with the limited timeline and funding that was available, the sites made suitable case studies.

In leaving the original building materials exposed alongside the new with careful thought given to the changing sunlight throughout the day, Scarpa's architecture reveals different layers of construction that are embedded with history and meaning and play into these various themes. In the words of renowned Italian photographer Guido Guidi: "Everything becomes true in the light of the sun." (Guidi & Frongia 2011: 22). Themes of authenticity, phenomenology, dark tourism, and the interactions of those themes guide understanding the transformation of these places into sites of 'true' touristic experience. Keeping them in mind, we arrive at the two central questions of this paper: How does one find authenticity in architectural tourism? How does architectural invention impact the visitor's authentic experience of the original?

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<sup>1</sup> Both authors contributed equally to the manuscript

## Literature Review

This article draws on the main themes of authenticity, phenomenology, and dark tourism in an effort to uncover the architect's role in tourist experiences. MacCannell (1973) first introduced the concept of authenticity to study the motivations of tourism. He explained the relationship of the tourist with spaces and places they deemed authentic and their quest for the truest experiences during travel. Many other scholars have examined authenticity since MacCannell (1973); however, they have conducted their investigations in many different modes. Krösbacher and Mazanec (2010: 12) identify Edward Bruner's ideas of authenticity (1994) as being "multilayered and understood differently by different groups." People understand authenticity differently and thus have different opinions of what can be regarded as authentic or not.

Coming out of a museum context, authenticity has generally been associated with objects as signifiers of what may be deemed 'true' or representational of a period of time or person or society of association. The authority derived from such an object has then been applied in the tourist realm. Wang (1999) adds to MacCannell's argument that tourists *infer* authenticity upon objects. They may change their perceptions in order to alter their experience, creating a sense of existential authenticity and more varied experience. Wang then categorizes authenticity into three subcategories: objective, constructive, and existential. Objective authenticity speaks to the authority of original objects (as in a museum context). Objective authenticity may also be related to what Boorstin (1964) deemed "pseudo-events" wherein tourists believe in the production of culture being offered them by their destination. Constructive authenticity is a projected imagery or belief of trueness by tourists on that which they believe to be authentic. Wang explains that this concept also deals with "'historical verisimilitude' or representation" (1999: 354) by which object reproductions may be credible for resembling the original.

Wang's concept of existential authenticity, long standing in many disciplines and with many authors including Heidegger, explains the idea that authenticity is not associated with toured objects. Instead, it is related to "*an existential state of Being* activated by certain tourist activities" (359). In this mode of authenticity, a tourist is looking to be centered in one's true self for a purer existence, as Cohen (2004) investigates later. Wang relates this kind of authenticity to nostalgia and inner states of perception of the world in which the tourist belongs.

Tourist destinations are designed to continually make tourists feel as though they are having the most authentic experiences in relation to the front-back dichotomy of Erving Goffman (1959) and elaborated by MacCannell (1973). MacCannell explained that tourists always seek the most authentic experiences, but despite being convinced of true experience, a false or contrived object, or one of "staged authenticity"—or authenticity that is imposed on the viewer—may be deemed by another as inauthentic. Therefore, in MacCannell's vision, object is directly related to experience.

German philosopher and the founder of the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was largely concerned with the world as experienced through the senses. Husserl's views on phenomena as experienced by multiple sensing subjects, removed any clear distinctions between subjective and objective realities (Husserl 1973; Malnar & Vodvarka 2004). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, French philosopher, advanced phenomenological theory by identifying the body of an organism as the "experiencing self" (Merleau-Ponty 1975; Malnar & Vodvarka 2004: 24-25) that was further built upon by key figures in phenomenological discourse such as Gaston Bachelard in his influential work "The Poetics of Space" (1969), and Martin Heidegger (1971). Phenomenological discourse gradually influenced architectural theory and individuals such as Christian Norberg-Schulz (1984), Steven Holl, and Juhani Pallasmaa who drew from Heidegger's work and wrote extensively on architecture and place, stressing the need for a building and its environment to complement each other. Their goal was to ground architecture in a phenomenological approach and put the focus back on the human subject as a counterpoint to prevailing architectural ideas and theory (Holl, Pallasmaa & Perez-Gomez 2006).

Finally, “dark tourism,” as coined by Foley and Lennon (1996) explains the relationship between tourism and death. Originally, they linked primarily the consumption of death by tourists to sites of war and disaster and the visitor fascination with such production. Stone and Sharpley (2008) illuminate the idea of “ontological security.” They argue that this kind of tourism undermines death’s finality and gives tourists the ability to make a sense of order and continuity in their own lives. The absent-present phenomenon also illustrates the change in the way death is treated as the real life process of death becomes a privatized matter but is portrayed more widely in popular culture and media.

## Method

This article investigates architecture and tourism using a qualitative lens, a method that we found most suitable for the themes investigated herein. An analysis of published tourism and architecture literature on these projects further reinforced our decision to select this method. Guido Guidi and Antonello Frongia’s *Carlo Scarpa’s Tomba Brion*, and Guido Beltramini’s *Carlo Scarpa: Architecture and design* provided two extremely comprehensive sets of photographs and writing on the selected projects to date. Each photo was visually reviewed for proportions, materiality, lighting, positioning of the objects and their display in space with the goal of studying each loci from a phenomenological perspective. Due to copyright restrictions, author photos are used herein for explanation. This author’s notes from her personal experiences and systematic observations at each site in the month of April 2011 were tested against Wang’s three types of authenticity: objective, constructive, and existential, as postulated in his paper “Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience” (1999). This exercise, along with the findings drawn from the photos, provided us with material for analysis and discussion, resulting in the formulation of final conclusions.

## Background

### *Castelvecchio*

Castelvecchio is part of a 14th century castle in the city of Verona, situated on the bank of the river Adige. A former barracks building, it was restored in the years 1924 through 1926 and reopened as a museum to house various works of art. After suffering extensive damage during the Second World War, renovations took place in the years 1958-1964 by the Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa who had become well known in the field of museum restoration (Buxton 2013). Scarpa’s method was to identify and remove any arbitrary additions and, wherever possible, reveal the original structure with its successive layers of architectural interventions. He devised a carefully choreographed route for museum visitors, giving them different views of one of the museum’s most important works, the equestrian statue of Cangrande I. Other highlights of this journey include the Byzantine-influenced courtyard garden and the protruding sacellum (small chapel) close to the entrance, clad in rough and smooth marble squares. The sculpture galleries are on the ground floor, with painting galleries directly above, on the upper two levels. After Scarpa’s death in 1978, restoration continued in several phases with completion in 2007 (Beltramini et al. 2007; Buxton 2013).

### *Querini Stampalia*

The director of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice invited Carlo Scarpa to work on its design for the first time in 1948. Count Giovanni Querini Stampalia had left the sixteenth-century building, which housed a library and art collection, to the public in 1869. Scarpa, however, was only able to begin work on the project in 1959 (Beltramini et al. 2007). The change from private to public use required that the garden and entrance needed rethinking. Scarpa’s

design therefore, addressed the morphological and material qualities of a historic Venetian palazzo as well as the needs related to the change of use. Scarpa created new access ways by enlarging an opening in the main facade and building a new bridge across the entry canal. He reclaimed the inside rooms by raising the floor surface of the entire area next to the canal. When Scarpa began studying the layout of the ground floor in 1959, he realized that the main problem was the possibility of actually using this floor, as it was made entirely inaccessible by the periodical flooding caused by high tides in Venice. He addressed this issue by controlling the movement of water, rather than blocking it off. According to the level of the water, the large main room could be completely free of water or completely immersed. Controlled, guided water was also the main theme of the garden for the relaxation of library users (Beltramini et al. 2007).

### ***Tomba Brion***

Designed by Carlo Scarpa in the late sixties and developed until the architect's death in 1978, the Brion Cemetery is an integral part of the cultural geography in the landscape of the city of San Vito d'Altivole. Giuseppe Brion was a local entrepreneur who, along with his wife Onorina, wanted to build a new family tomb as an extension of the existing local cemetery. After his premature death in September 1968, his son Ennio recruited Carlo Scarpa to design the project. A professor at a university of architecture in Venice, Scarpa had already gained a reputation in the previous decade for his renovation and reorganization of art museums, such as the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice and Castelvecchio in Verona (Beltramini et al. 2007; Guidi & Frongia 2011). Scarpa's design for the cemetery evoked a bunker or a bastion, with its outer concrete wall inclined inwards at a 60° angle, and the old Napoleonic cemetery behind it. The turret of the funerary chapel rises up above the wall, and a secondary entrance permitting the passage of the coffin during funeral services penetrates the wall at this point. The main entrance to the Brion burial garden is through the old cemetery. Here, a tall cubical structure surrounds visitors, directing their movement. Finally, at the top of the staircase, a corridor leads toward the tombs of Giuseppe and Onorina Brion, the Brion family tomb, and the funerary chapel to the left with a small pool and a wooden pavilion in the opposite direction (Guidi & Frongia 2011).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Authenticity: Debunking the Pseudo-Event***

“The design (of Castelvecchio) aimed to create a private experience between the viewer and the object”- (Buxton 2013, 20).

Castelvecchio, restored between 1957 and 1964 by Carlo Scarpa, is situated at the outermost edge of the fortification of Medieval Verona. Its original connecting bridge across the River Adige and restored drawbridge harken back to the ideas of security in the Middle Ages (Beltramini et al. 2007; Buxton 2013). In this project the concepts of layering and staging of authenticity and light as a revealer are illuminated. The entrance to the castle is via the old drawbridge and into the courtyard of the present-day museum. Walking through the portal, visitors are transported back in time; however, Scarpa allows for modern reflection through his restoration in the midst of the old walls.

Yet, in the process of [re]making history, how does new architecture recreate the old? In Castelvecchio, Scarpa has left the medieval fabric of the original building and added modern elements to highlight the sculptures and paintings. He attempts to hold on to, but also recreate, authenticity of the original collection. Each gallery is part of a greater sequence, staged for a specific experience, but not to be understood as a pseudo-event. The idea here is that the architect is *staging* authenticity, not creating a staged authentic experience with front and back stages, as proposed by MacCannell (1973). For example, the statue of Cangrande I is at the end of the

second floor galleries, but is carefully placed so that at any time visitors may reference their position relative to the sequence Scarpa has created. Further, inside the museum, objects and artwork are arranged such that visitors may have a private, almost religious, experience with them. Each piece is allotted room for contemplation and admiration respectively with some separation from other pieces or collections. In this way, the architect showed his mastery of space manipulation and ability to direct user perception via architecture and choreography, or directed movement through each gallery and around the art.

Krösbacher and Mazanec (2010) implore that authenticity “is not bound to perceptions of tangible and intangible forms of tourism” (228) but also in participation. Participation in the case of Castelvechio is more interaction-based. Visitors have the opportunity to actively engage with both the medieval castle as shown in Fig. 1 and the modern interior renovations as shown in Figs. 2 and 3 below as they progress through the renovated galleries, walk on the ramparts where the medieval guards may have stood, lounge in the courtyard as if they were the patrons of the castle, and shop in the gift store as present day tourists. The duality of the historical past and modern present in the scheme that Scarpa has created makes visitors more susceptible to an authentic experience in a liminal space and creating awareness of a time other than their own.



Figures 1, 2, & 3: The drawbridge (left), choreographed gallery (center), and the statue of Cangrande I (right) in Castelvechio.

*(Image sources: A. Bliss)*

## Dark Tourism

At the Tomba Brion, the concept of dark tourism is the most appropriate approach to analyzing the architectural site as a tourist destination. However, the prevalent idea of ontological security, in which death gives visitors closure and a means by which to cope with their own life and ending (Stone & Sharpley 2008), is not the main focus, but rather a piece of a larger conception. In this setting, a journey from preparation to veneration and finally to the eternal in built form becomes the primary means of understanding Tomba Brion. Upon entering the site, visitors are immediately drawn to the temple space as shown in the plan (Fig. 4) and the exterior image (Fig. 5) below, where they may prepare themselves for the rest of the journey to see the resting places of the Brions or others in the original cemetery.



Figures 4 & 5: Plan showing 1-temple, 2-tombs, 3-water (left) and temple exterior (right) in the Tomba Brion  
(Image source: A. Bliss)



Figure 6: The tombs of the Brion patrons  
(Image source: A. Bliss)

From preparation, visitors move to the tombs in order to venerate the patrons. The cocoon-like nature of the housing for the sarcophagi of the Brions as shown in Fig. 6, shows the care and respect Scarpa paid to their mortal resting place. Visitors may connect with the level of attention to entombment and thereby gain a sense of ontological security (Stone & Sharpley 2008) by understanding that their own remains may be treated with such care.

From the tombs, visitors continuing on their journey are presented with a crossroads at which they must decide whether to continue on Scarpa's path or to visit the original cemetery. Moving along the path, visitors are confronted with a body of water in which a pavilion is floating. The water symbolizes the cyclical nature of life—that of birth (from the water), death (into the water), and rebirth (from the water again). Once again, this idea holds fast to the ontological security Scarpa has already created at the tombs. The water at the end of the journey (Fig. 7), acts as a sensory reminder of the calm that comes from passing but also of the eternal or forgiving nature of the cycle of life.



Figure 7: The water and pavilion at the end of the journey at Tomba Brion  
(Image source: A. Bliss)

## Phenomenology

### *Light, Layers, History*

Krösbacher and Mazanec (2010) identify Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s ideas of authenticity (1994) as being “multilayered and understood differently by different groups.” The image below of Castelvecchio clearly represents an engaging juxtaposition of light, layers and history. As one exits into the courtyard at the ground floor, the wall directly in front is exposed and unornamented, showing various layers of stone with brick infill (Fig. 8), a process of wear and tear due to wars and weather conditions over the last two centuries and with subsequent repair work. They are exposed in raw daylight and Scarpa makes no attempt to hide them. The stair, also shown in Fig. 8 below, is completely new, and together with the renovated gallery and original layers, Scarpa attempts to create a directed experience for the museum visitor.



Figure 8: Exit from the museum into layered wall courtyard, Castelvecchio  
(Image source: A. Bliss)

## The Choreography of Space, Light, and Movement

In the Tomba Brion, the transitional space between the old and new cemeteries makes the visitor slightly uncomfortable: despite its thick concrete walls, it remains open to the elements—light, wind, and rain. It is neither a passageway nor a room, it is visually and physically disorienting, questioning one's own stability by calling into question bodily dimensions, position and direction (Guidi & Frongia 2011). This relates directly to Cohen's concept of center (2004), in which visitors are allowed to experience a temporary get-away from their routines through phenomenologically distinct types of tourist experiences. On a sunny day, bright streaks of sunlight coming from above and behind hit the interior surfaces of the vestibule to the inner sanctum as seen in Figs. 9 and 10. A large window on the far wall formed by two intersecting circles—also shown in Fig. 9—opens up to the outside garden, wall, and the sky (Guidi & Frongia 2011).



Figures 9 & 10: Transition spaces in the Tomba Brion  
(Image source: A. Bliss)

## Identity

Through transformation from private to public, architecture has the ability to lose identity. Yet, Scarpa's own interventions at Querini Stampalia provide a clear directive by which visitors may understand and interact with the architecture in a unique way. As in Castelveccchio, entering Querini Stampalia via a bridge over the canal transports visitors back in time, but the modern features of the renovation of the once private palazzo allow them to reflect on their experience in a contemporary framework. In Venice, water levels often rise and the city is flooded. Scarpa responded to this phenomenon by welcoming water into the site instead of turning it away (Beltramini et al. 2007). How far visitors can get into the main room (Fig. 11 & 12) depends upon the water level at that particular time. Subsequently, the series of rooms housing the extensive collections speak to the era in which they were recreated while housing an extensive collection of Renaissance artwork. After moving through the gallery spaces, visitors are emptied into a redesigned garden space (Fig. 13), which, like the entry, also includes the canal's water, in an attempt to connect both spaces. It creates a serene contemplation space so that visitors may recount what they have seen, allowing them to re-center themselves in a modern setting, but

understanding the historic nature of the site at the same time, whether or not they seek such a divide and restructuring as Scarpa provides. Cohen (2004) acknowledges that each person seeks or encounters a “strangeness” from their own everyday reality. In this architectural setting, where old and new, private and public, have been melded, “strangeness” is apparent as this is not a phenomenon most visitors experience in their own lives.



Figures 11, 12, & 13: From left to right: Water entering at the front, passageway with accessibility determined by water, and water channeled through the garden at the back of Querini Stampalia

(Image source: A. Bliss)

## Conclusion

### *[Re]making History: How Does Architecture Recreate the Old?*

Carlo Scarpa (re)made history at heritage sites in Verona, Venice, and San Vito d'Altivole by creating astonishing density and complexity in ancient monuments through a series of architectural interventions. Through a series of transformations, he presents the old with the new, creating other types of authentic experiences for tourists. Scarpa's work validates Cohen's concept of center (2004) which postulates that different individuals have different experiences that in turn illuminate the relationship of modern people to their society and culture. Touristic experiences are a temporary getaway from one's center and they maintain relationships with it that go towards creating phenomenologically distinct types. This is manifested very clearly in Scarpa's three architectural masterpieces discussed in this paper. In all three sites, light shows us layers and history in its true form. To repeat what photographer Guido Guidi (2011) said of Scarpa's work, "Everything becomes true in the light of the sun." We do not know whether Brion is a tomb, monument, garden or cemetery. But there is one constant, and that is the notion of a journey through space, light and movement. By opening up to natural elements, Scarpa also captures the sense of the Brion countryside.

Support for each of these arguments is validated by Wang (1999) in "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," in which he discusses three types of authenticity: objective, constructive, and existential. These three types of authenticity are clearly found in all three sites presented, along with the notions of center, dark tourism and ontological security, identity that emanate from them. Objective authenticity is an authenticity of originals, i.e. toured objects, as recognized by the viewer (Wang 1999, 351). This type may be found in the galleries of Castelvechio, as objects from the Medieval era are staged, but can be recognized as original artifacts. Further, the Tomba Brion allows for this notion of original artifact in the form of grave markers with an artistic twist that provide not just authentic Scarpa, but ontological security for

viewers. Constructed authenticity is the type that is projected onto objects by tourists of producers of tourism through imagery, preferences, expectations, or beliefs and thus can construct a different notion about the same object (Wang 1999, 352). This type can be associated with the experiences visitors project onto the renovated Castelvechio and Querini Stampalia, especially as they move through the portals that transport them back in time. Visitors hold an expectation of what a drawbridge or Venetian bridge over a canal might be, and the producer (Scarpa) sought to provide those experiences in the renovation. Finally, existential authenticity refers to finding and feeling the authentic self via tourism and participation. It may be bodily (individually) or socially constructed (Wang 1999, 351). This final version relates to both the Tomba Brion journey and to the re-centering of self at the end of the Querini Stampalia visit. Each provides a more internal and intangible sort of authentic tourist experience.

In the end, however, it seems that Scarpa has validated Wang (1999) and Cohen (2004) in each of these projects, giving credence to what is purported in each type of authentic experience via these three sites. Castelvechio, Tomba Brion, and Querini Stampalia provide travelers and tourists, as Boorstin (1964) would have it, the means to an authentic and intellectually stimulating trip in Italy with architect Carlo Scarpa as the guide.

### *Implications and Applications*

This paper aims to bring up key questions and points of discussion that are often overlooked in design and planning processes by professionals and decision-makers instead of proposing definite solutions or design guidelines for improving cultural and heritage sites. Recent developments and trends in heritage and cultural tourism, such as the creation of an exact replica of the 3,245-year-old tomb of King Tutankhamen in Egypt's Valley of the Kings (Del Giudice 2014), in order to make a museum for tourists raise the same questions of authenticity time and again.

Architecture and tourism together have created a platform for understanding tourists' holistic, authentic experiences through renovation, manipulation, and preservation of artifacts and phenomenology in each of the three Scarpa sites in Italy. We already know that authenticity matters from previous studies (Belhassen & Caton 2006), however, understanding how architecture perpetuates authenticity is an important part of the tourism discourse that is very often overlooked. This study specifically looked at architect Carlo Scarpa's works in three different locations and investigated how themes of phenomenology, dark tourism, and identity are used to engage tourists and create authentic experiences that have a direct impact on visitor satisfaction.

The use of qualitative methods also proved effective in analyzing how architectural interventions can produce positive transformative experiences for tourists. The case studies are limited to three sites in Italy that were designed by one architect, but the outcomes of each case study are different. The results of this research lay the groundwork for future qualitative studies of this nature at various other architectural tourism sites around the world in order to delve deeper into the issues of authenticity as well as discover many more emerging themes that have wide-ranging implications for tourism.

The findings of this study have broad implications for those engaged in tourism and visitor research and for professionals involved in the planning and preservation of museums and heritage sites. The power of architecture to attract tourists at various sites all over the world clearly legitimizes the need to understand its impact on the tourist and visitor experience at these locations. A limitation of this study is that while it examines factors that directly impact visitor satisfaction research, it does not extend into the latter. Studies that measure visitor satisfaction have been limited so far, concentrating mostly on the tangible and intangible elements of tourist sites, and largely ignoring their experiential nature (Krösbacher & Mazanec 2010). Future researchers could explore how the themes explored in this paper directly impact visitor

satisfaction at various locations. Such studies would help make architectural tourism sites more economically viable by attracting tourists and at the same time, preserve valuable cultural and heritage sites.

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