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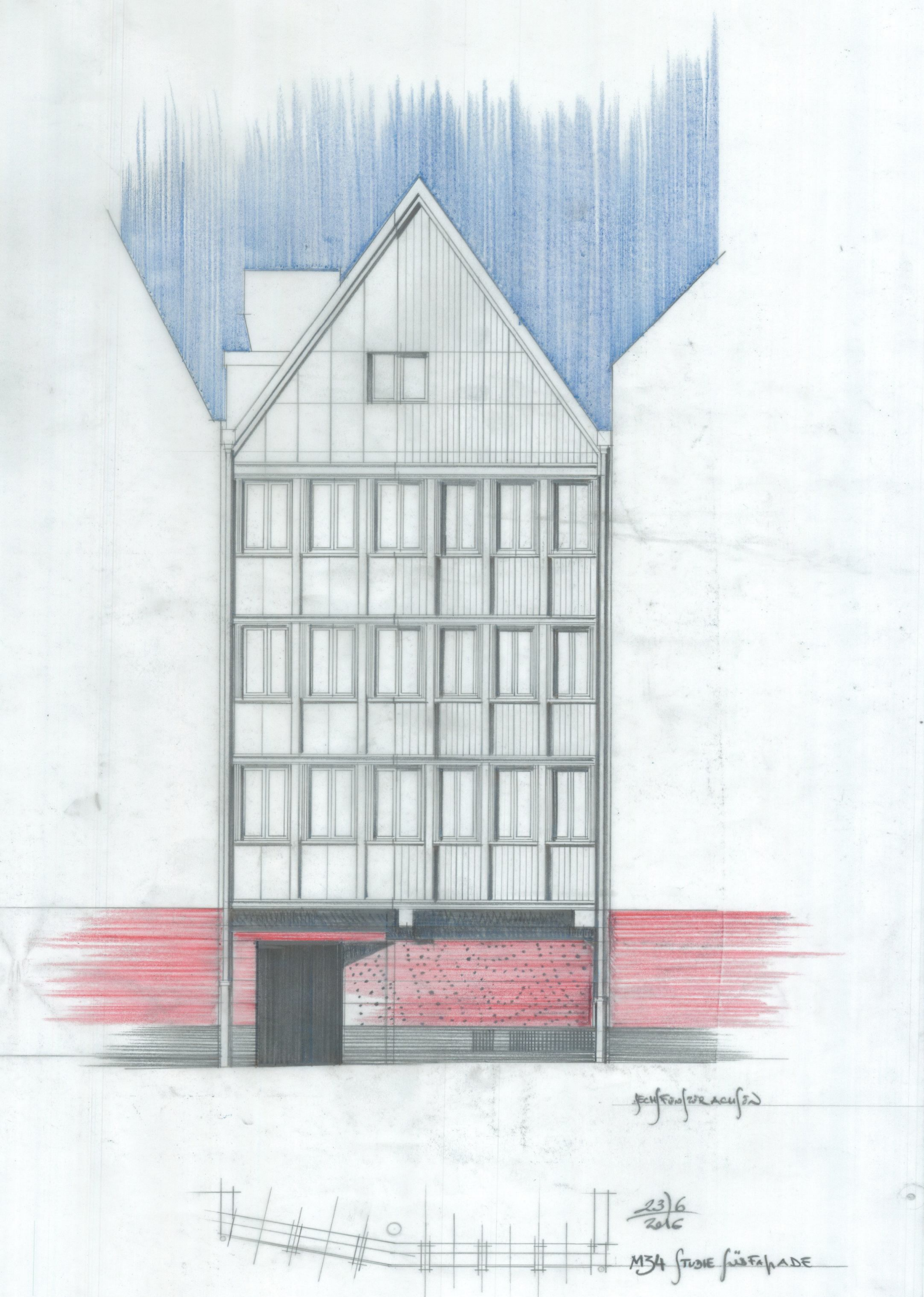
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CONSTRUCTION RECONSTRUCTION RESISTANCE (OPPOSED TO RESILIENCE)

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, new buildings have been built on the ruins and foundations of previous works. Is building not far from re-building? The presence of the past is project forming. Architecture is about carrying forward what has preceded us, providing a more advanced version of how we found it. We are not interested in embalming the past. We prefer to recognize its ability to accept the transformation without denying it. As personal experience I bring to edA the reconstruction of the Dom Römer quarter in Frankfurt. The case history is dedicated to the second reconstruction of the site, destroyed by bombs and by the first afterwar reconstruction. M34 is a passive house featured for high sustainable performances (as the old/new quarter all around - project with Anna Worzewski, Ilaria Corrocher, Valentina Fantin, Serena Acciai - Monumental Pergola also with PAS Jourdan & Müller + Steinhauser).

Keywords: Resilience/resistance, construction/reconstruction, Dom Römer old/new quarter, cultural heritage, passive house

Resilience – it's cool now - is a global topical word which stereotypically is currently applied also to architecture. Resilience – properly - is rather related to materials, sometimes it could be even a quality that a social context or a person may have. It is, for example, a person's ability or an attitude to deal with critical problems without weakening (for instance, ethnic resilience, which is often witnessed as a central feature of most immigrant groups, is intended as the mixture between awareness of racial and cultural differences, and the social solidarity that originates from such awareness). We do not wish to reject the common and widespread interpretation of the word's meaning, at least not among ourselves architects engaged in continuing or preserving cultural heritage, places, pre-existing landscapes or reconstructed cities. But, in light of the above, we prefer to talk about RESISTANCE, as EdA review is asking us.

RESISTANCE intended as the property of places and landscapes not to water down their identity in a misunderstood globalization. As personal experience, the built one I mean, I bring here the reconstruction of part of the city center in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The case history is dedicated to the second reconstruction of the Dom Römer quarter, at the foot of the cathedral. As architects, we are what we are doing; and I do know that this work is quite far from the fashionable, global, glamorous, unsustainable and a bit ridiculous star system characterizing the architects' market. Sorry, I was born in Italy, a country that sometimes no longer exists.

In Frankfurt the right bank of the River Main lies downtown near the hill where the Cathedral rises. An outpost of Roman origin placed to protect the ford on the river. The most extraordinary Gothic quarters once standing all around the cathedral recall the experience of the European city. Goethe describes it in his *Faust*: *the tumult forced the bourgeois houses into the center of the metropolis, before the wide avenues and streets, here you have the narrow streets, the pointed gables, and a tight market of houses on all sides, and cabbage and onions and then the meat counters.* The city is built by types: two parallel walls distant the maximum of a timber beam, some passages that aren't even roads for wagons. This is the settlement's principle, this is picture, these are the urban rules fixed in the plans until WWII.

The Dom-Römer was shaven to the ground in 1944.

The fire after the bombing destroyed the wooden houses but left the stone basements. Immediately after the war, the remains and the rubble were cataloged and placed in a museum, as well as being sold by weight to private collectors. Now the City of Frankfurt has regained the old stones from collectors, finding many of the red weak sandstone house remains and some pieces of the basements in black hard. During the post-war period the area was cleaned up and the quarter was poorly reconstructed in the late Fifties with a large underground parking and public buildings. Now, after a long debate, in the recent years the Municipality, who has the property of the lots, courageously decided to demolish again the post war buildings and organized an architectural competition, promoted by Dom Römer Gmbh, a company of public development.



Fig.1. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Haus M34, the wooden south facade towards Krönungsweg and Pergola. Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



Fig.2. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Haus M34 (in the middle of the picture marked by white plaster). Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



Fig.3. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Haus M34, "belvederchen"/small terrace on the roof. Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



Fig.4. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, the red sandstone monumental Pergola and Haus M34 (in the background, wooden buttercup yellow facade). Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH

The old quarter is being resurged due to a meticulous job done by the Municipality on the plans of the old registers and on the ancient surveys of the facades. Some houses were rebuilt as they once were, where they once were. Some other houses have been composed, or recomposed, by a constant comparison with the old, but without sacrificing the new (among other architects Hans Kollhoff, Tillmann Wagner, Morger + Dettli, Berndt Albers, Jordi & Keller, Dreibund Architekten, and Francesco Collotti who is reporting the experience here).

Building here is re-building without making a copy but seeking out the old measure and the proportion of the Gothic town while looking for a new possibility of warm life between these walls. Just a few hundred meters from the European Central Bank tower.

Building here is re-building, giving to experience of the city a slower time.

Here makes sense talking about the resistance of the architecture, anyway contrasting the memory loss so often affecting Europe now (and not only Europe, indeed). The quarter is crossed by the ancient route where the royal crowing procession was performed, in direction of the cathedral. A small altitude gap, not far from a high step, still marking the topography in front of the Schirn Exhibition Centre, the civic hall for contemporary art. For this place, the old Krönungsweg, we propose a monumental pergola in full stone blocks, properly reinforced and tensioned, cut in the red veined sandstone from the Main valley and rooted to the ground by black basaltic lava blocks. The ancient route once lost has been rediscovered, not by reconstructing the old facades, but recomposing the sequence as a backstage. Attempting to return its lost identity (both the projects, house M34 and pergola, with Anna Worzewski, Valentina Fantin, Ilaria Corrocher, Serena Acciai, the pergola also with PAS Jourdan & Müller + Steinhauser). The measurements, proportions and details of the pergola stem from our basic survey of the nearby cathedral. The ancient existing stone being the project construction material.

The challenge with the past is direct, obliged, site-specific based. For centuries, new buildings have been built on the ruins and foundations of previous works, using these materials in various ways. Sometimes for so called *spoliatio*, redeploying trabeations and tombstones in the foundations of Byzantine or medieval walls. The ancient stones are used as building material or as ready made platforms.

All around the Mediterranean here is the experience of Naples, Arles, Nîmes, Milan, Ravenna, Split, Zadar, Thessalonica, Byzance/Constantinople/Istanbul, Amman, Aleppo, Alessandria. We're interested in the deployment of these fragments or of these buildings as construction material for the architectural project. Sometimes the reusing of old roman stones is considered or as ideological punishment against the Romans (as in Pisa) or as legitimization for new power using the fame of the Roman Empire (as in Venice). A typical example is the inclusion in new walls of upside-down-set roman stone inscriptions. Admiring them, and - at the same time - reusing them in a submitted way. Changing the sign but exploiting the authority and the power of the monuments.

Is building not far from re-building? Buildings such as the Orsini Palace by architect Baldassarre Peruzzi, built in Rome on the Theater of Marcellus, or the Cathedral of Syracuse, in Sicily, where the church was built in the cell of the previous Doric temple, all these examples demonstrate the use of a building concept not far from rebuilding. These examples are an invitation to calmly consider the trauma or the events that over the centuries have altered the buildings.

Contaminated, processed, amplified, measured and reconstructed or re-used in a second life, the classical and late classical ruins are the material on which the landscape and the town is built in the following centuries.

Anyway as architect, nor as historian nor as art critic who I am not, I suggest to consider that the presence of the past is project forming. Architecture is about carrying forward what has preceeded us, providing a more advanced version of how we found it.

We usually work as architects, by hypothesising, by showing similarities, sometimes by associations or even by placing - by choice - side by side other far away buildings. Linking them to each other - comparing them - is an attitude capable of producing meaning. Did the *giving-shape–to-the-memory* replace the classical architectural language?

In architecture, indeed, fast advances and antique gestures go hand in hand, the continuity is a condition, not a choice. We are not interested in embalming the past. We prefer to recognise its ability to accept the transformation without denying it.

What is the relationship between old and new, which continuity, at what distance?

These questions would be able to go beyond the absolute gap between restoration and *anything-goes-project*, in which the contemporary architectural debate seems to be confused.

On one side there are the supporters of total embalming implemented by mere restoration, and on the other we meet the prophets of that untidy and irresponsible design.

Is it still possible to think of a second life for old buildings?

How to use the old buildings or how to use the past to build new ones?

And where is the border between conservation and embalming?

In every project there is a necessary process of accumulation that our work from time to time composes and decomposes.

Our attitude to re-read the urban phenomena and sort through the project is maybe forced to survive in fragments. For fragments of plans, of architecture, of ideas, lives the contemporary city (Aldo Rossi). For fragments we can still evoke tasks often forgotten for this job, obliging us to continue to build-up the city and landscape, relocating it with memory projection, as transfigured it may be.



Fig.5. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Haus M34. Northwest room. Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



Fig.6. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Haus M34. Interior staircase. Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH

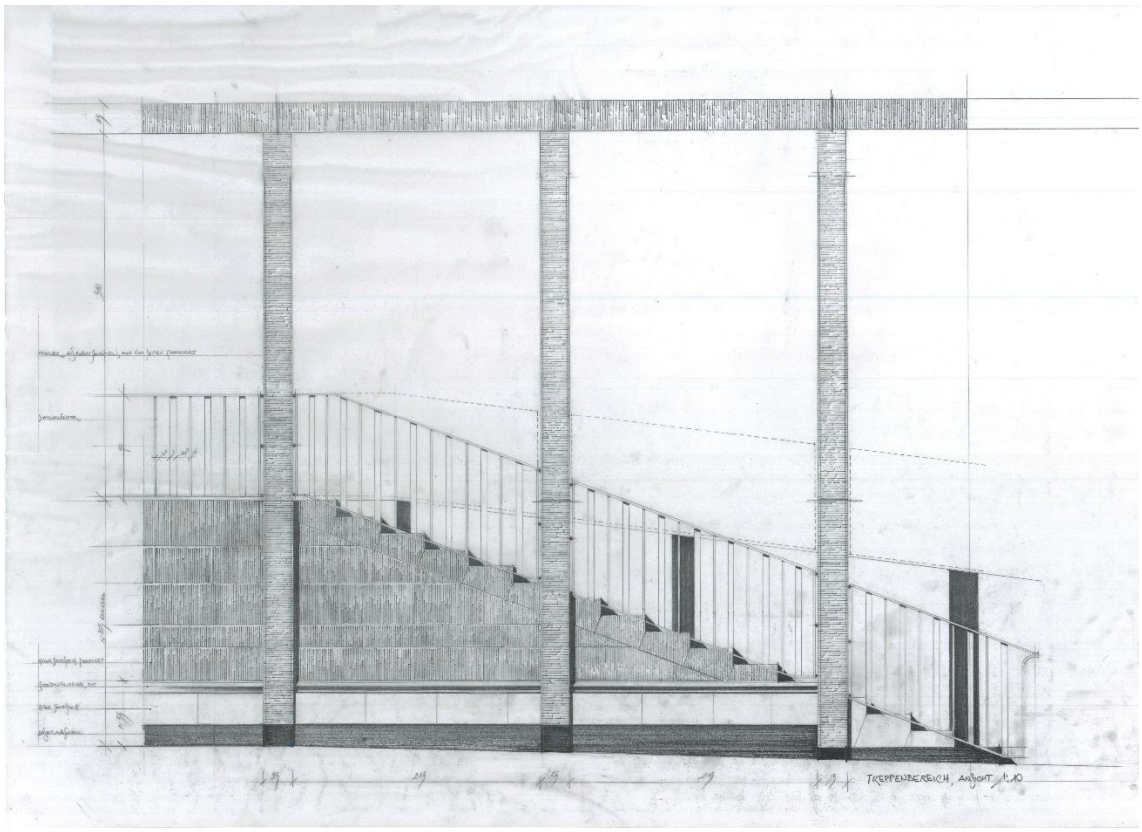


Fig.7. Monumental red sandstone Pergola at Krönungsweg (span elevation and public staircase), by Francesco Collotti

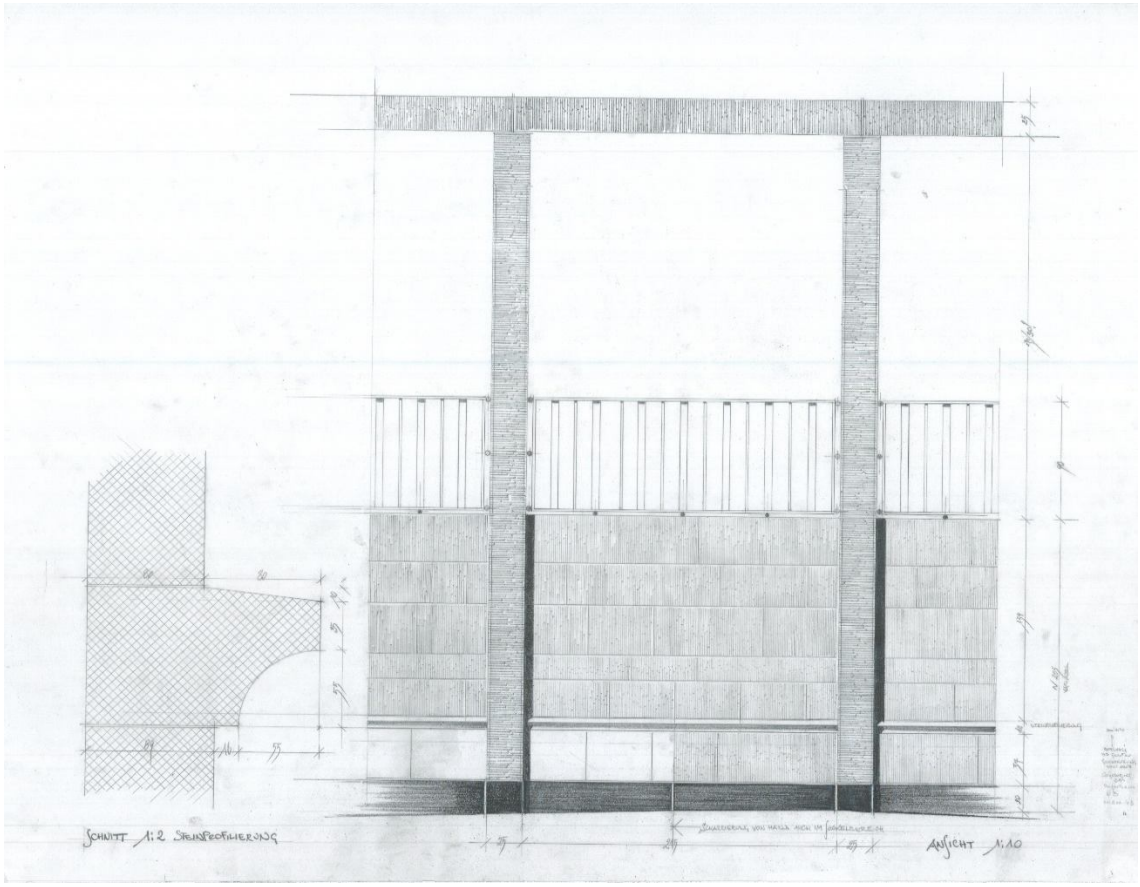
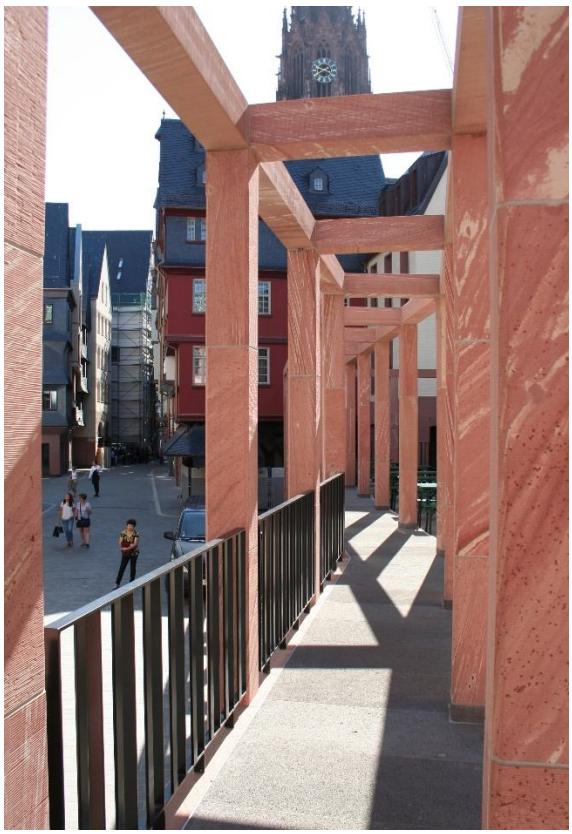


Fig.8. Monumental red sandstone Pergola at Krönungsweg (span elevation and details taken from the Dom), by Francesco Collotti



Fig.9. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Monumental red sandstone Pergola at Krönungsweg (taken form the Schirn - background Haus M34). Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



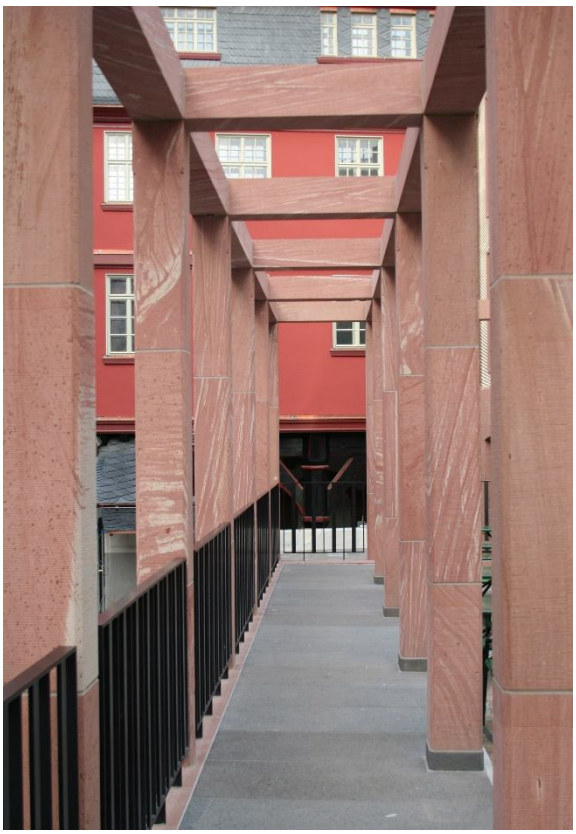


Fig.10-11. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Monumental red sandstone Pergola at Krönungsweg (details). Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



Fig.12. Frankfurt (Germany). Francesco Collotti, Monumental red sandstone Pergola at Krönungsweg. Photo credits: Dom Römer GMBH



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