

terra agra

# FIRENZE architettura

2.2010



firenze architettura 2.2010

ISSN 1826-0772



Periodico semestrale  
Anno XIV n.2  
Euro 7  
Spedizione in abbonamento postale 70% Firenze

terra agra

In copertina:  
 © Alex MacLean  
 Deming, Nuovo Messico  
 Questo reticolo di strade realizzate nel 1950 era il primo passo per realizzare un insieme di piccole fattorie di cento metri quadrati l'una. Fallito il progetto, 60 anni dopo i tracciati delle strade sono ancora chiaramente visibili sul terreno.  
 Per gentile concessione di Alex MacLean

# FIRENZE architettura

2.2010

Periodico semestrale\* del Dipartimento di Architettura - Disegno Storia Progetto  
 viale Gramsci, 42 Firenze tel. 055/2055367 fax. 055/2055399  
 Anno XIV n. 2 - 2° semestre 2010  
 Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Firenze n. 4725 del 25.09.1997  
 ISSN 1826-0772  
 ISSN 2035-4444 on line

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**Info-grafica e Dtp** - Massimo Battista  
**Segretaria di redazione e amministrazione** - Grazia Poli e-mail: firenzearchitettura@arch-dsp.unifi.it

Proprietà Università degli Studi di Firenze  
 Progetto Grafico e Realizzazione - Massimo Battista - Centro di Editoria del Dipartimento di Architettura - Disegno Storia Progetto  
 Fotolito Saffe, Calenzano (FI) Finito di stampare novembre 2010

\*consultabile su Internet <http://www.progarch.unifi.it/GMpro-v-p-34.html>

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# Antonio Capestro

## Rocchetta, un borgo di pietra

Antonio Capestro

Nel cuore delle Marche, in provincia di Ascoli Piceno è arroccato il Borgo di Rocchetta, antico centro rurale nato intorno al XIII secolo e ormai abbandonato dagli anni '70. È collocato a cerniera tra il Parco Nazionale dei Sibillini ed il Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e collegato alle più importanti arterie di comunicazione che lo inseriscono in un territorio regionale e nazionale.

Frazione di Acquasanta Terme, Rocchetta si colloca al centro di un'area di elevato interesse naturalistico e culturale per la sua notevole omogeneità geologica e botanica e per gli innumerevoli borghi che punteggiano il territorio. "Borghi di pietra" per le caratteristiche architettoniche che, con un forte carattere di verticalità, si incastano nelle pareti rocciose di arenaria a sviluppo orizzontale alcune delle quali sono reinterpretate come case-grotte. Questi antri rendono il territorio intorno a Rocchetta *spugnoso* e denso di spazi che, introversi ed estroversi, modellano l'andamento del paesaggio naturale.

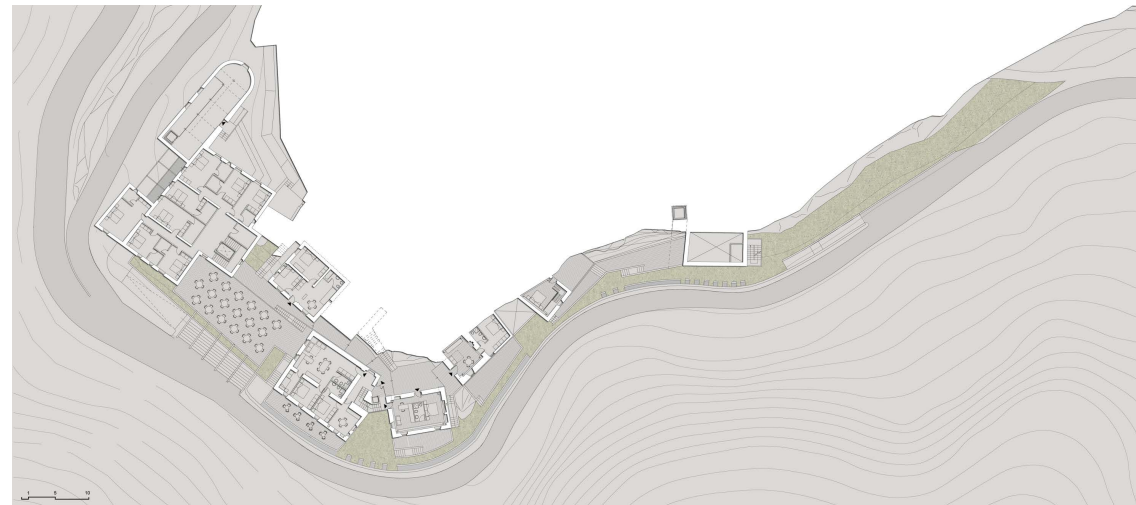
L'obiettivo del progetto di recupero del Borgo di Rocchetta e del suo contesto è stato quello di elaborare un quadro operativo per la promozione del territorio che individua un indirizzo di sviluppo tra riqualificazione e reinvenzione delle sue risorse.

Le operazioni di riqualificazione si sono articolate attraverso il recupero del Borgo come sistema architettonico significativo dal punto di vista spaziale e semantico;

Le operazioni di reinvenzione hanno ripensato un ruolo di eccellenza per Rocchetta nell'ambito di un circuito di pregio costituito da un sistema di par-

chi naturali e piccoli borghi che, seppure presentino risorse, necessitano di una rilettura delle proprie potenzialità.

Il Borgo di Rocchetta viene proposto come sistema ricettivo diffuso con attività di piccolo commercio tematico e promozione della cultura locale. Pur preservando l'immagine del borgo il progetto ne reinterpreta l'impianto rifunzionalizzando volumi, percorsi e collegamenti verticali e di accesso in maniera da permettere una fruizione migliore sia sul piano delle destinazioni d'uso che su quello del superamento dei dislivelli attraverso l'abbattimento integrale delle barriere architettoniche. La sequenza di muri in arenaria, di contenimento dei dislivelli, che si snodano nel paesaggio disegnandolo, hanno suggestionato il progetto che reinterpreta questi elementi del luogo. Il muro diventa abitato quando prende vita amplificandosi in spazi che contengono attività, dal *percorso benessere*, attuale basamento in arenaria su cui poggia il Borgo reinterpretato come terrapieno abitato con attività legate al benessere, alle *grotte abitate* con attività di commercio tematico, culturali e tempo libero fino al *Centro di Formazione*, Intervento ex novo ai piedi del Colle dell'Icona che, reinterpretando il tema dei muri di arenaria, diventa *muro abitato* organizzato con servizi per la ricerca e la cultura del territorio.



Progetto di Recupero del Borgo di Rocchetta  
Comune di Acquasanta Terme  
Ascoli Piceno  
2007  
(progetto in corso)

Committente:  
Picenum srl

Progetto:  
Antonio Capestro (coordinatore)  
Piero Paoli  
Bianca Ballestrero  
Cinzia Palumbo  
Fulvio De Carolis

Collaboratori:  
Nadia Migliorato  
Riccardo Monducci

Consulenti:  
Costantino Berardini  
Giovanni Massicci  
Alessandro Vittorini Orgeas



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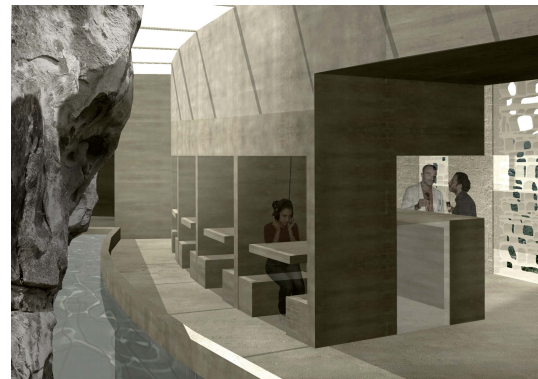




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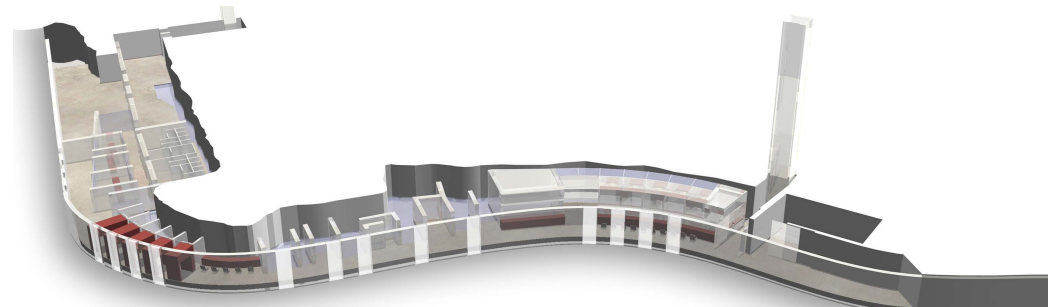
11



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- Pagine precedenti:
- 1 Vista attuale del Borgo
  - 2 Nuovo ingresso al Borgo
  - 3 Pianta piano primo
  - 4 Interno Grotte Benessere
  - 5 Esterno Grotte Benessere
  - 6 - 7 - 8 Sezioni
  - 9 - 10 Vedute notturne
  - 11 Interno Residenza
  - 12 - 13 Interni Percorso Benessere
  - 14 Percorso Benessere



the end of the short story to better support his ideas. If in the original tale the authors declare the supremacy of reality -and the possibility of its abstraction- over the one to one scale representation of the Map by leaving it to the "the following Generations [which delivered] it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters" in the deserts of the West where "Tattered Ruins of the Map [are] inhabited by Animals and Beggars"; in Baudillard's version it is the simulation of reality -the Map- that replaces the Territory of reality. This is a process where the original models or ideas are progressively substituted for their simulacra: in Mass Media as well as in Marketing strategies; in Politics as well as in Economics. 'Henceforth, it is the Map that precedes the Territory -precession of simulacra- it is the Map that engenders the Territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the Territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the Map.' Alex MacLean is an American aerial photographer, trained as an architect, whose work is mostly devoted to recording the beauty, the transformation and the consumption of the landscape of the United States of America in an endless exercise of (aero)dynamic balance. It is not only because Alex is capable of flying his plane and taking pictures at the same time, but also because in his work converge without any contradiction landscape photography, 'à la Jane Jacobs' urban analysis, disenchanting documentation of the growth of hyperreal urban sprawl and a passionate narration of the ecological problems caused by the development of the American cities. These are environmental issues affecting the state of our planet which we usually tend to understate. Because we are too scared of the consequences or simply because we are hypnotized by the charms of the Map. A layer so densely crowded with strip-malls and shopping centers, amusement parks and suburbs all designed for us, who are trapped behind the wheel of our large automobiles.

Alex MacLean shows us the paradox of this unsustainable lifestyle with the elegance of his images. Pictures conceived according to the Borgesian scale of the Territory: a landscape of natural and cultural relationships wider than any contractor's building site. A vision MacLean translates into a series of textures and patterns which are recognizable only from his ever changing point of view. An observatory over different geographies, so similar in the end to the winged eye symbolizing Leon Battista Alberti's humanistic approach towards architecture.

## Antonio Capestro

*Rocchetta, a village of stone* by Antonio Capestro

(abstract page 46)



The ancient village of Rocchetta, founded around the thirteenth century and abandoned the 70's, is located at the junction between the Sibillini National Park and the Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso and connected to major arterial roads that form part of a regionally and nationally. Fraction of Acquasanta Terme, Rocchetta is at the heart of an area of high natural and cultural interest for its remarkable geology and botany and consistency

for the many villages that dot the territory. "Villages of stone for architectural features, with a strong character of verticality, is nestled in the cliffs of sandstone with horizontal, some of which are reinterpreted as cave dwellings. These caves make the area around Rocchetta spongy and full of spaces that introverts and extroverts, shape the evolution of the natural landscape.

The objective of the restoration project of the village of Rocchetta and its context was to develop an operational framework for the promotion of the territory that identifies an address in development between regeneration and reinvention of its resources.

## Maria Grazia Eccheli, Riccardo Campagnola con Francesco Cololotti

*"Latomia di luce"* by Carmelo Provenanzi

(page 52)



Francesco di Giorgio Martini wrote these scenes about the way to design and build in the water, in the prologue of "Treaty of civil and military architecture" sixth book. Livorno carries in itself the memory of a port-and-water town surrounded by a big ramparts' crown that developed with the addition of the defensive Fort S. Peter and a series of collateral refurbishments, starting with the little Venice up to the extension of San Marco's Rivelino. The town evolutionary charge is lacking in the contemporary town, which is unable to create a methodical development, almost without an evolutionary spontaneous sense and outlined by "big contours that merge and tie its body with the environment" However, the town today remains anchored with a proletrian image, made up with neighborhood and popular layers, now made symbols by Virzi's frames and neorealistic references about its entity that remains traditional "where youth was beautiful with its honey of young women and hunger". The Maria Grazia Eccheli and Riccardo Campagnola project focuses on the historical city centre and aims to investigate and broaden the knowledge of the site through the analytical study of Leopoldina cartography. The Forte Mediceo in the city centre is crossed by a crescent sign, a retaining curved wall that is a pretense to

creation and an occasion for considerations about pre-existence and design, preservation and processing. A unique and huge opportunity to develop again a place central to the town, but abandoned for years and heavily degraded, that could be revitalized by public exposures and city life cultural exchanges.

The project's components are the Livorno city walls military architecture and old slaughterhouse halls that have been stratified in itself in the last two centuries. The whole project is based on two levels: the port city share and the fort artillery ancient ramparts. Water and earth. The basic outlines of the slaughterhouses lower level across the curved wall they dematerialize, becoming simple dividing walls, lightweight diagrams that lead to the hypostyle hall giant pylons that welcome museum' spaces. Drums are high truncated pyramid, covered with nearly suspended vaults, that just like pawns in a big game in the lapping water that runs silently, like a river to the sea. And the water, captured in its fluidity, turns into shape, it becomes horizontal plan and it marks a path conjuring up Mediterranean arsenals images.

The project recalls the Schinkel's lesson about Oriand palace, in Crimea, in the structure of which, the author writes "I tried to confer more significance, meaning and elegance to the base, so I realised that the interior was like a fresh walk into a cave". Similarly the fort base seems to be a subtraction of matter, an land erosion, but also a foundation in sight where the idea of dig and construction meets together according to a dualistic view of space. In the gloom of this latomia, a faint light enters the space through regular cuts, such as cracks in the ground and in the glare of the water they stage theatrical chiaroscuro.

The system retrieves the tax rate of the ancient defensive earthwork and the long curved wall, tracing the ancient ramparts of the stronghold, it is flanked by a promenade which reaches the outer cover: a vast plain, perfectly horizontal, which balances the underlying space complexity. A large slab, archetype reference to a massive megalithic stone block, became the Mediterranean's city garden made of trees, warmth and light. The stone pines, stretch out between sky and sea like arms into the Tyrrenian Sea, reinforcing the idea of an area now returned to the town, which can finally look at the sea horizon from the sun terrace.

A project, therefore, not only based on intellectual knowledge, but that is configured as the sum of sensations and perceptions derived from the earth and its vibrations. A sort of ideological functionalism in which the memory and the matter become principles and reasons of a new design attitude.

traslation by Alessandro Cossu

## Renzo Piano

*The architect and the earth* by Antonio Capestro

(page 58)



For some time we are seeing trends in architecture that seem to evolve into forms and spaces in search of a more ancestral material to the land. After a long process that brought us physically and virtually beyond the culturally recognized places seems you feel the need to rethink the architecture welded to one

of the principles that humans have always investigates, from myth to philosophy to science. The land again becomes material to design in architecture as "the set of changes and alterations introduced in the Earth's surface of human life" as he had supported William Morris at the end of the nineteenth century.

When in the eighties is feared by many urban necrosis discussion of architectural research focuses on models of spaces between, needs and desires, they could propose a new vitality for the city and architecture through the opportunities offered by communication technologies. Among the many keys in a particular interpretation emerged: the network of almost infinite possibilities offered by new technologies needed, however, rooted and sensitive points are recognizable enough to allow that globalization was a missed opportunity to transmit diversity. But the wave of diversity that unconditional pardon the reference coordinate system that has generated a process that is dangerously away from that should need to feel part of a place because this is the time and culture who enjoys and identifies with it. And we have come closer to a dangerous trend in a number of appeals has repeatedly rewritten history to architecture: the trend towards standardization, internationalization up to the globalization and unconditionally approved as lack of identity and roots.

And the genius loci? In the huge opportunities offered by new technologies, sociologists, philosophers, urban planners, architects and saw the whole of society has the opportunity to reaffirm their subjectivity in a system of global relationships in a sort of Renaissance of the second millennium. Too bad that we have lost one of the terms of the combination of globalization and that the survivor has threatened or is likely to lead to the nihilism of the most essential reference for living in a place. Working the earth proposes the architecture of the STAR feeling *hic et nunc* with the knowledge to be able to experience the world as conscious subjects. That is no longer enough to do everything in every place and in the same way, there is a desire to add value to the experience of need is done through the exchange with people and spaces. No longer suspended volumes such as the airport of Osaka and the stage of Bari as a *tribute to the lightness*.

Renzo Piano returned to the land that allows him to implement the poetics of

poetry do as a matter of rethinking old building through the ingenuity and creativity to explore a contemporary expression of this new material chased from place to place and yet capable of being calling in a wider network of relations for the exceptional role it plays like the Klee Museum, Academy of Sciences and the Volcano of Nola. The subject land is reinterpreted as a tribute to sustainability, which proposes a renewed relationship with the environment by fusing traditional materials with existing technologies; the potential infinite finite resource.

It does not seem that this architecture will require such self-celebration of the land as a resource by barriers. Beyond the clichés are architectures that take responsibility to reinterpret the genius loci in an innovative way through the field, such as land, which still has much to communicate and to give.

## The stone of Petra: architecture in the rock

by Stefano Bertocci



The geographic area currently occupied by present-day Jordan has always been a crucial node between Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean and often the possibility to control this territory has been essential for the political order of the entire Middle East due to its location. The thin strip of fertile agricultural land at the edge of the Eastern desert, set along the Jordan valley, the Dead Sea and the Wadi Araba, which represent an extension of the "Rift Valley", naturally constituted one of the main arteries for the traffic between the Arabic peninsula and the Mediterranean peoples. For this reason, in addition to the rich mines, this area has always

been disputed between the ancient Mesopotamian empires, Egypt, Anatolia and Rome and subsequently between the Muslim and Christian worlds.

Within the area of Petra, located at the edge of the Eastern desert plateau and Wadi Araba, at elevations between 800 and 1000 mt a.s.l., are some of the most ancient known proto-urban settlements, dating to the XVII and XVI cent. B.C.; Sela (the Greek name of Petra) was the capital of the kingdom of Edom that arose during the iron age. The Nabataeans occupied the site between the VII and VI cent. B.C., an Arab people that quickly developed into a powerful force in the trade between the Far East and the Mediterranean, and their capital Petra was enriched, between the I B.C. and I cent. A.D., with sumptuous monuments and grand funerary architectures. Following its conquest by the Romans, at the hand of Traiano in 106 A.D. and, subsequently, with the migration to the north of the trade routes towards Palmyra and Gerasa, and to the south towards the Red Sea, the city began to decline. In the V century the city became a bishopric seat but, following the conquest by the Arabs, even the function of frontier and link between the Byzantine and Arab tribes was lost. The conspicuous remains of the fortified settlements built in the area during the brief reign of the crusaders document the importance of Petra in the Muslim world as a hub for the nomadic Arab and Bedouin tribes at least until the XII century.

### The discovery of Petra

In 1812 the Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt revealed to the Western world the splendid architectures of Petra, often conserved intact due to the geomorphologic characteristics of the site, as well as to the unique monolithic building technique. The great success of the first descriptions enriched with fine illustrations such as those of Leonde and especially a series of splendid lithographs by David Roberts, edited between 1842 and 1849, derived from drawings drafted in 1839 during a specific expedition from Egypt to the Holy Land, contributed to increase the interest in the mythical city.

The monumental stone façades, rich in classical suggestions, strongly characterized by the natural chromatics distinctive of the geology of the valley and by the unique relationship with the harsh nature of the settings, with the sharp contrasts produced by the light of the Jordanian desert environment, soon caught the attention of scientists. In 1898 Brunnow and von Domaszewski published a detailed report of the façades sculpted in the archaeological area. The chronological sequence formulated by von Domaszewski was abandoned following the publication of the tombs of Medain Saleh, a Nabataean site in Arabia with an extensive monumental necropolis, by Jaussen and Savignac in 1909. Here the façades were enriched with numerous epigraphs, something extremely rare in Petra, and it was thus possible to document the almost simultaneous realization, during the I cent. A.D., of the first four types of tombs identified in Petra by von Domaszewski. However, the dating of Nabataean stone architectures has continued to stimulate lively debate among scientists until the recent works of Judith McKenzie summarizing the state of the art. Beginning with accurate cataloging and surveying of the principal examples of Petran art, with frequent comparisons with the tombs of the Medain Saleh necropolis and with the research carried out since the 1950's using excavations of some of the main finds of the urban area of Petra, she has presented a complete critical review of the chronology of the monuments of the valley.

One of the main points of interest, derived from McKenzie's analysis of the Medain Saleh tombs, and confirmed by the results of the research on some of Petra's monuments carried out since the 1950's by, among others, Hammond, Wright, Parr e Zayadine, has been the emphasizing of a gradual transformation and simplification of the classical elements of the adornments with time, almost as if, following a first highly innovative period characterized by the uncritical use of classical architectural elements, derived mainly from the Hellenic influence of the Ptolemaic world, the Nabataeans felt the need to develop a specific architecture more closely linked to their culture and to the environment in which it formed.

In parallel to the discoveries at Medain Saleh, in which it has been possible to identify the schools of the rock carvers on the basis of the epigraphic evidence, each equipped with a unique system for the modulation of the architectural elements, also in the analysis of the monuments of Petra a noteworthy importance has been attributed to the analyses of the modulation of the elements, with the aim of their correct understanding. On the basis of accurate comparisons of style and of modulation of the adornments, the work of McKenzie attains an historical-critical classification of the façades in which elements derived from classical architecture are identified, into six groups, structured according to a relative chronology that starts from the first years of the I century A.D. with the temples of *Kasar el Bint* and *Khasneh*, until the first half of the II century A.D. with the *Tomba di Sesto Fiorentino*, dated 129 A.D. and the only slightly subsequent *Renaissance Tomb*. The abovementioned criteria, however, are inapplicable, as the author also affirms, for the classification of the non-classic architectures such as those in the first four categories identified by von Domaszewski (*Pylon Tombs*, *Steps Tombs*, *Proto-Heger ed Heger Tombs*).

The architectures currently present in Petra were part, originally, of vast monumental complexes including, as well as the structures already mentioned, a sequence of spaces and edifices as seen from, in addition to the archaeological evidence, an inscription on the *Turkmaniya* tomb that describes the entire complex. It was composed of the main tomb and other sepulchral chambers, a courtyard in front of the façade, the adjoining gardens containing additional edifices and terraces, the triclinalium and the cisterns, all of which are surrounded by walls. A comprehensive critique of the Nabataean architecture is therefore extremely difficult without further archaeological work, also due to a series of settlements, moreover well articulated and mostly unexplored, that developed during the period of major expansion of the Nabataean kingdom, from Syria with Bosra, up to the present-day Israel and a part of Saudi Arabia.

### The great rupestrian architecture of Petra

The *Khasneh*, or treasure of the Pharaoh, from the first years of the I century A.D., is the scenic background of the last section of the Siq, the unique entrance to the valley of the city of Petra that is approximately three kilometers long and originates from a natural opening on the rock cliff that forms the eastern wall of the valley. The large articulated façade, built on an almost vertical rock cliff, measures 25.30 meters in width and 37.12 meters in height; the front of the monument, has two orders. The basal order, placed upon a stylobate, laterally has blind spans while in the center a vestibule occupies three spans, is fronted by a staircase and is surmounted by tympanum. The superior order is articulated into two *aediciae* surmounted laterally by symmetrically placed broken tympanums and a central *tholos*; the latter is placed beneath a drape closed out by an akroterion in the shape of a capital supporting an urn. The entire façade is enriched by elegant sculpted adornments, the friezes on the trabeations and the tympanum of the vestibule are embellished with patterns, while between the blind spans, high relief figures are placed upon pedestals. The vestibule of the basal order leads, by means of a large portal preceded by a staircase, to a vast chamber with a square plan, containing three small rectangular rooms placed at the center of the three internal walls. The vestibule also conducts, to two smaller chambers that are on the left and on the right of the vestibule itself. The recent excavation in front of this monument has brought to the light a sepulchral camera located under the porch area.

The *Deir* and the *Tomb Palace*, probably dating to the end of the I century d.C. or to the start of the II, are of similar size and are the largest carved architectural structures of Petra. The prospect of *Deir*, with a façade 48 mt wide and 48 mt high, has a simpler geometry, with a square grid of eight cells per side, based on the column axes of the two orders of the central portion of the façade. The latter essentially repeats the *Khasneh* model, with a base of five cells and a height of eight, with the addition of two wings, each having a width of one and a half cells.

The large façade is composed of two orders: the basal one appears to lack a stylobate, has a varied trabeation with a large portal in the central inter-column and *aediciae* in the external inter-columns. The order is laterally enclosed by quarter columns. The superior order is characterized by the central *tholos* surmounted by a drape closed out with an akroterion in the shape of a capital supporting an urn, with an *aedicia* in the blind span beside two elements beneath a broken tympanum.

The prospect of the *Tomb Palace*, is slightly larger than the *Deir*, a square of 48.40 mt per side, it is modulated according to a square grid of eight cells per side, based on the axes of the columns and the openings of the basal order. The superior orders of the façade follow a sub-grid modulated on the division into six parts of the of the sides of each cell of the base grid. The façade is articulated in five orders: the basal one is set on a stylobate, has a broken trabeation surmounted by a low attic containing the tympanums that emphasize the openings of the internal chambers. The second order consists of paired columns supported by a broken trabeation, set on a podium and surmounted by a low attic. The third and fourth orders are reduced and consist in pilini surmounted by capitals that support a broken trabeation. The fifth order consists of defaced and blind spans of semi-columns placed against paired columns in sequence with blind spans.

Two-thirds of the three terminal orders of the façade, were built, rather than being directly excavated in the rock as were the previously described architectures. From the remains of the masonry it is possible to understand the building technique: large blocs accurately worked, Of smaller dimensions, compared to the previously cited examples, the *Tomb of Sesto Fiorentino* is one of the few that conserves the original Latin inscription that dedicates it to *T. Aninius Sextius Florentinus*, governor of the Arab province, on behalf of his son and dated to 129 A.D. This façade also has a complex modulation, although it is different from the