



Carlo Scarpa has frequently been called 'architetto poeta'; Martin Heidegger claimed that 'all art . . . is essentially poetry'. It seems that we tend to equate poetry, a form of verbal communication, with the highest achievement of art and particularly with its emotional content. This may be a historical legacy that goes back to Homer.

In the last half a dozen decades – in certainly less than a century – there has been a new emphasis on visual communication and especially on visual communication across distance. Until relatively recently the illustrated book or journal was the only distributor of visual information. All this has changed dramatically; we may now absorb more organised information visually than ever before. Architecture has benefited from this change. Through its dissemination in visual media, architecture is becoming a more popular, a more discussed, topic. Perhaps as a result also a more relevant topic.

But architecture is itself a visual medium and thus a participant in the current visual revolution. Electronic means of visualisation, computer aided design, and the subsequent turning of these visualisations directly into processes of manufacture (computer aided manufacture) have dramatically altered the procedure and well nigh erased the craftsmanship of drawing as a daily occurrence. Virtual reality speeds up the rate of change and may continue to do so. Electronic visualisation will also extend the range of the possible as it did in the case of the Bilbao Guggenheim or the London Millennium Dome. We may know intellectually that such buildings relied heavily on computer aided design but I do not believe that we know perceptually; we do not say this was drawn by computer and this by hand when we look at architecture.

I would therefore claim that the design process in architecture and many other fields is in its essence, and particularly its sequence, unchanged. Architecture not only envelops us protectively but is always also part of a culture, of a past that has a present and a future. It is interwoven with our history and has