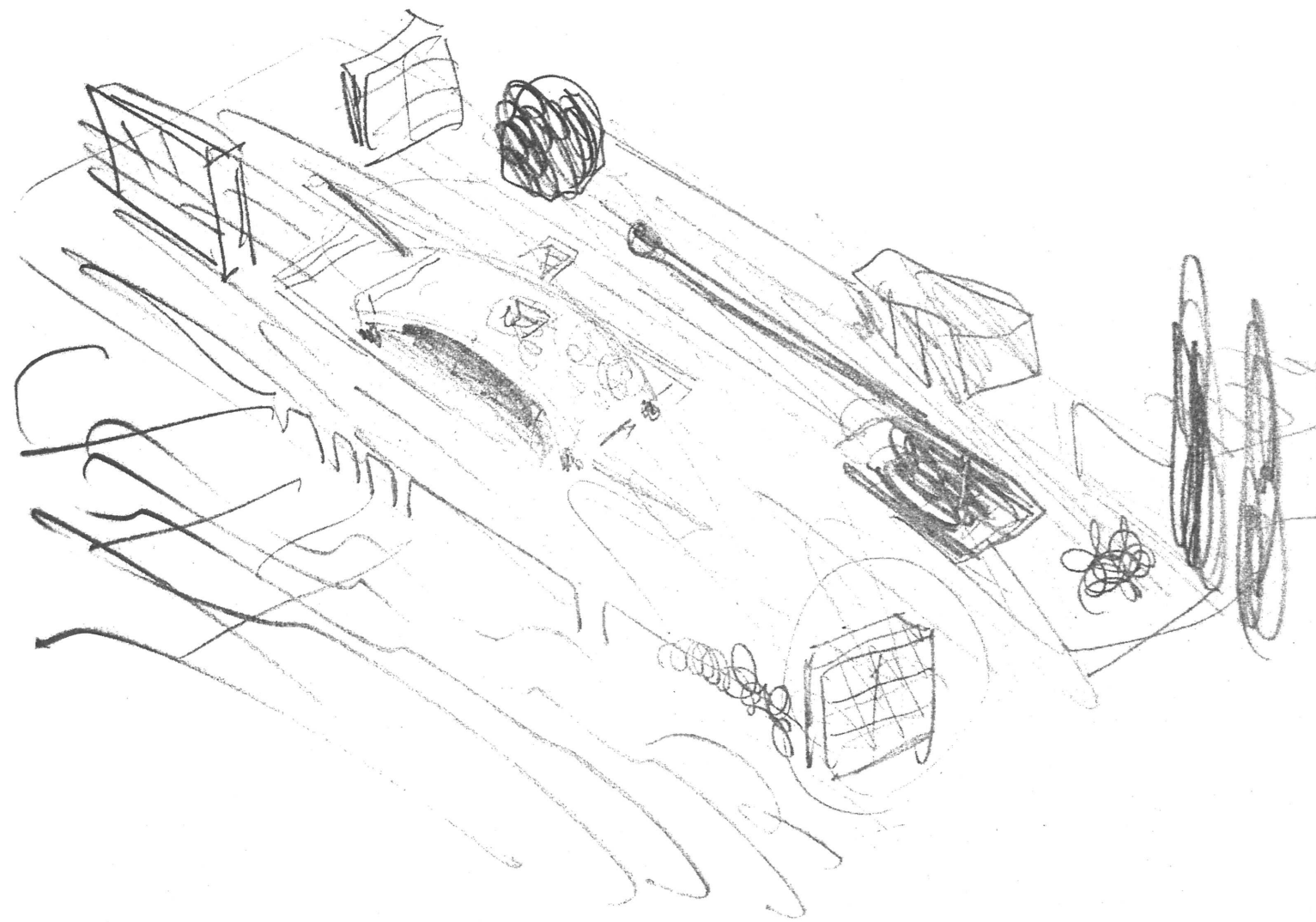


われわれは詩人を必要としたのです

エンニョ・ブリオン氏インタビュー

We needed a poet.

An interview with Ennio Brion



ブリオン家墓地の初期のアイデア/スカルパのスケッチブックより。
An initial idea of the Brion Cemetery in Scarpa's sketchbook.

——ブリオン家の墓は世界中でもっとも美しい詩的な建築のひとつです。しかも、偉大な墓や廟のほとんどが遠い過去につくられたものであるのに対し、ここはわれわれの時代、現代に建てられたのです。私はヨーロッパを旅行する際、巡礼地のようにブリオン家の墓に立ち寄ることにしています。何度訪れても飽きることなく、驚きとともに新鮮な発見がある場所だからです。また、そこに身を置くと、何か生氣のようなものが自分の中で湧き上がってくるのを感じます。

さて、歴史に残る名建築というのは、優れた建築家ひとりの偉業に帰するのではなく、素晴らしいクライアントの存在が必ず建築家の影のように付き添っており、両者のコンビネーションによってこそ生み出されてきたものだと思います。ですので、この墓をスカルパに依頼したブリオン家には非常に尊敬の念を抱いていますし、何よりも、一体どのような方々なのかとても興味をもっていました。また、こんな奇蹟的建築をどういう考え方でいささつて育むことになったのかお聞きしてみたかったです。

ブリオン 古代建築家のウィトルウィウスは、良い建築には、父としての依頼者、母としての建築家があり、両者の良い関係によって素晴らしい建築が生まれると言っています。まさにその通りだと思います。

父、母をはじめ、私の家族は美術の愛好家でした。私も両親から具象絵画を学びましたが、特に好きになったのは建築とデザインでした。両親は「ブリオン・ヴェガ社」という家電メーカーを起し経営していましたが、私はその製品がたんに高性能のものであるというだけでなく、良いデザインのものでなくてはならないと考えていました。そこで、デザイナーとの共同作業によって製品をつくらうと両親に提案したのです。そうしてブリオン・ヴェガ社の歴史はつねにデザイナーとともに生きることになりました。

われわれがそれを通して学んだのは、良い建築を求める依頼者は、どの建築家を選ぶかを計画できなければならないということでした。まず、建築家を選ぶ能力もっていなければ、互いのハーモニーは生まれてこないのです。さらに重要なのは、それぞれのテーマには、どのような建築家がふさわしいかを見極める眼をもたなければならないということです。たとえば、誰がカルロ・スカルパに工場の設計を依頼するでしょうか。しかし、われわれがイメージしていた「墓」というテーマには、詩人が必要だったのです。そして詩人とは、カルロ・スカルパその人以外に考えられませんでした。

ブリオン・ヴェガ社では、マルコ・ザヌーソに工場の設計を依頼しましたし、製品のデザインにはザヌーソをはじめ、フランコ・アルビーニ、アキーレ・カスティリオーニ、マリオ・ペリーニなどの建築家にお願いました。ですが逆に、彼らには墓のデザインを依頼しないでしよう。つまり、墓のような高い次元の詩を要求するものは、そうそう誰でもつくれるものではないのです。

——まず、ブリオン・ヴェガ社の企業精神というものがあって、その流れの中でこの墓が存在すると理解すべきなのですね。

ところで、最初にスカルパと出会ったのはいつごろで、それはどのようなものでしたか。

ブリオン 1961年にトリノで開催され、スカルパが会場構成をした「イタリア'61 ヴェネト館」で初めてお会いしました。彼は奥様のニーニと一緒にでした。そのときは軽く会話を交わしただけでしたが、それ以来、スカルパの建築に夢中になりました。当時、私は経済を専攻する学生だったのですが、オリヴェッティのショールーム、カナダ・モントリオール博覧会のイタリア館、カステルヴェッキオ美術館など、彼の作品を見てまわりました。

——では、父上の墓に対してカルロ・スカルパを選んだのは、ほかでもないエンニョさんご自身だったのですか。

ブリオン そうです。父は元気なときから、生まれ故郷であるサン・ヴィット村を永眠の地と決めていました。そこで、村の共同墓地の一角を購入したんです。私はそのとき、お墓の設計はスカルパに依頼したらどうかと提案し、父は了承してくれました。その土地とは、共同墓地の角のところで、現在スカルパ自身が埋葬されているあたりです。

父が亡くなり、われわれは予定通りスカルパに墓の設計を依頼しました。私は、スカルパが絶対に美しい作品をつくってくれると確信していましたので、それを守るために何か良い方法はないのかと思案しました。そのころはまだ若く、なんの知識もちあわせていませんでしたが、あるとき新聞で、高速道路のわき25m以内はいかなるものもつくってはいけない、という当時のイタリアの規制を知り、これだと思ったのです。そして母に相談し、共同墓地に沿って幅25mの土地を、父の墓を守るようなL字形で入手したわけです。

——それは驚きました。だからL字型の2200㎡という、墓としては先例のないかたちと広大な土地となったのですね。

ブリオン 今お話したように、そもそもの考えは、共同墓地の中の一角に墓をつくり、周りにはあくまでそれを守る場所という位置づけでした。ところが、数か月後にスカルパが出してきた案は、現在の状態とはほぼ変わらないものだったのです。

——初めてスカルパの案を見たときのあなたの印象はどのようなものでしたか。

ブリオン とても興奮しました。彼が用意してきた模型を一目見て、これは芸術作品になると悟ったのです。われわれは普通の墓をイメージしていたので、このような墓はまったく想像を超えたものでした。

そのとき、このプロジェクトには、すべての文化の源が注ぎ込まれていると感じました。根幹的なわれわれの伝統文化とオリエンタ文化、それらから成立している現代の西洋文明から生まれたものであると。部分的には日本や中国の影響が見られますが、それはスカルパが京都へ行って桂離宮などを見てまわったからでしょう。彼はいつも日本の文化を尊敬していましたし、ほかの東洋の国々の建築にも興味をもっていました。それらを彼一流のとらえ方で、自身の建築に吸収していったのでしょう。

ブリオン とにかく、墓をつくりあげていく過程でわれわれにもっとも必要だったのは、勇気をもちつづけて進めていくことでした。当時、イタリア全土が共産主義や社会主義運動の波におそわれていたために、このような建築が矢面に立たされて批判を受けたのです。パオロ・ポルトゲーゼは、これはまさしく豪華ヨットを買うのと同じくらいだと書いてきました。建築大学の学生たちの批判の標的にされたこともありました。もちろん、村人たちの反応は良くありませんでした。このようなかたちで表わされる文化というものを、彼らは理解できなかったのです。

そんな中、私の母であるオノリーナが断固たる姿勢で、しかし思慮深く世間と折衝していきました。スカルパとの交渉も母がして、私は尊敬する母のつねに影の支えとなるよう努めました。

1972年には、イタリアにおけるもっとも偉大な建築の巨匠であったイグナチオ・ガレラとフランコ・アルビーニが墓を訪れ、非常に感銘を受けたと言ってくれました。このことで、私はますます確信しました。そして、村の人たちに言ったのです。「見ていなさい。このプロジェクトは今に教育的意義をもつようになるのです。あなたがたがわからなくても、あなたがたの子供たちがこの墓を見て、遊んだりスケッチをしたりする中で、そのうちの誰かがきっと建築家を目指すようになるでしょう」と。今、私の言葉は証明されることになりました。

——すでに8回ほどここを訪れて、ときには夜明け前から日暮れまでいるのですが、そうしていると村の人たちが近づいてきて、とても親切にしてくれます。彼らがこの建築をとて誇りに思っていることが感じられますし、今では村の大きな財産となっているとわかります。あなたの言った通りになりましたね。

ブリオン あのころ、村人たちは不親切でしたが、それはまったく彼らのせいではありません。社会状況のせいなのです。当時のイタリアの状況は、日本では想像できなかったのではないですか。建築家は大衆のために設計をすべきであるという風潮だったのです。でも時が経つにつれ、村人たちもこの建築が素晴らしい芸術作品であるとわかってくれるようになりました。

——駅からは遠く足の不便なところですが、今では観光名所のように世界中から多くの人を訪れる場所となっています。建築関係者のみならずさまざまな老若男女が、小さな村サン・ヴィトの、しかもまったくコマーシャル主義とは無縁の一個人の墓を見にやってくる。一日に何十人もが、まるで磁石に吸い寄せられるように。

ブリオン この建築はイタリアの文化を受け継いだ、唯一の現代建築だと思っています。私はいつも、スカルパによるこの墓と、フランク・ロイド・ライトの落水荘を念頭におき、比較対照するのです。この二つの建築は、私にとって非常に重要であり、強い魅力を感じるものです。

ブリオン家の墓と落水荘はまったく正反対に位置づけられるもので、互いに対照的な存在です。つまり、「生」という意味の空間を表現している落水荘と、「死」という意味の空間を表現しているブリオン家の墓です。

人間のため、という意味において、落水荘は全うしているのではないのでしょうか。太陽、月、雨や風、雪のもとで光がうつろい、自然とともに人の時も流れていきます。水の音とともに生気に溢れた美しい光景は、まさしく自然そのままに人間を抱擁し、育てています。そこは「生」に対する精神で満たされているのです。

一方、ブリオン家の墓は、自然の中で死に対する思いを結晶化させた、人間の生というよりは、人間の「魂」が存在している空間なのです。それをスカルパは、建築という形態の芸術作品として残しました。ですから、まるで美しい交響曲のように、人々の心に深く滲み入り感動を与えるものとなり、今では多くの人々が見にくくなったのだと思います。いつの間にか、ブリオン家の墓は歴史に残る建築となり、それと同時にカルロ・スカルパも伝説上の人となってしまいました。

——あなたにとってスカルパとはどのような人でしたか。

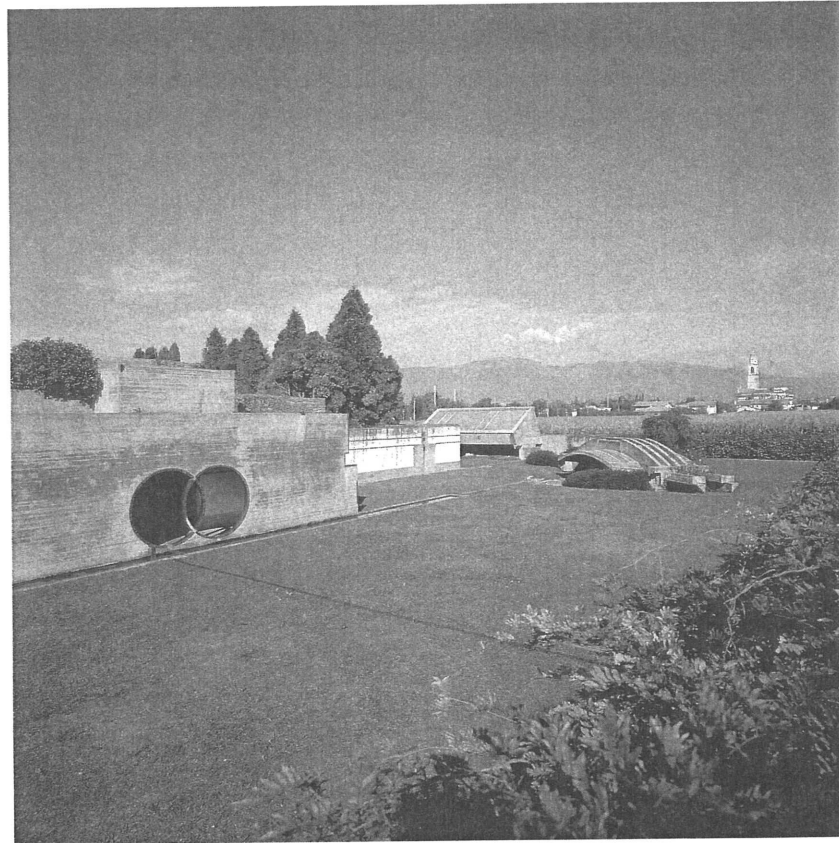
ブリオン スカルパを理解するには、彼のそばにいた人でないとわからないと思います。つねにすべてのものに興味をもち、感応し、こだわりつづける人でした。今までの私の人生を通して、彼のようなタイプはほかに誰も知りません。どんな小さなものの中にも宇宙をつくりだす、ひとことと言えば、大詩人でした。

しかし、詩人であったがために、彼の人生は苦しみの方が多かったのではないのでしょうか。煩悶の日々を送り、彼にとって人生が友となったのは亡くなってからだと思います。名誉博士号をはじめ学位もなく、死後にそれらは与えられました。ヴェネツィア時代において、建築家として認められない時期もあって、そこを去り、アゾロ、ヴィチエンツァへと移り住みました。結局それ以来、二度とヴェネツィアに居を戻さなかったのです。

スカルパは、社会からの「怨」と「愛」のはざまに人生を過ごしたのです。世の中の辛苦を嘗める一方で、彼に建築を依頼した人々は、社会においてもっとも選ばれた、ずば抜けて高い感性と審美眼をもった人たちでした。私の母オノリーナもスカルパの良き理解者であり、深い交流がありました。私にとって、このことは誇りです。

「この仕事は私だけができる」と、そのような人々を相手にスカルパは明言しました。彼自身の内には、みずからの感性に対する確固たる自信が深く根づいていたのです。職業上の仕事として取り組むのではなく、依頼人の要求に呼応した「作品」をつくりだしていったのです。それは、つねにヴェネツィアの職人たちとの深い絆によって達成されてきました。

——スカルパのディテールやテクスチュアの要求に応えられる職人の層が、いまだヴェネツィアには存在し、代々受け継がれていることは非常に重要だと思います。ヴェネツィアの文化に触れるにつけ、ここは宝石箱のようだと感じます。われわれ異邦人が思わ



ず唸ってしまうような、美しくも迫力溢れるディテールやテクスチュア、プロポーションが、何百年も前から現在に至るまで、建築や美術品に類するものはもちろんのこと、ごく日常的なものから、機械のような無味乾燥としたものにまで息づいているからです。たとえば、スカルパが手掛けたヴェネツィアのコレール博物館に展示されている大昔の印刷プレス機などを見ると、まさしくスカルパ的ディテール以外の何物でもありません。スカルパというと、細部にこだわる職人芸的建築家と見なす人がいますが、ヴェネツィアを中心とするヴェネト地方に身を置くと、彼が突然変異的な気遣い——言葉は悪いですが——であのような完成度のディテールにのぞんだわけではなく、歴史と風土によって培われてきた美意識を母体に、それを再解釈して現代に提出しようとした建築家だったのだということがよくわかります。

ブリオン ヴェネト地方は、ものすごく優しく、豊かな場所です。自然・人・文化がとてまうまく調和したところなのです。それは、ヴェネツィア共和国というかたちで国が存在したからです。料理ひとつを例にとっても多種多様ですが、それらが共存しています。とても慎ましく質素なパスタ・ファジョーリやリゾット(いんげん豆のパスタやリゾット)から、正反対の、たとえばハリーズ・バーが出すようなはねあがった料理まで。

そもそもヴェネツィアの人間には起業家精神というものがあります。昔でいえば、ヴェネツィアの商人たちです。そういう人々の集合体としてヴェネツィア共和国ができたから、均衡状態だとか調和といったものをとりわけ重んじ、必要としたのです。そのことは、ブリオン家の墓地があるサン・ヴィット村においてさえもいえます。近くにはパラディオのヴィラ・マジェール、そこから15kmのところには新古典派の彫刻家アントニオ・カノーヴァの生まれたポッサーニョがあり、スカルパの手掛けたカノーヴァ美術館があります。あんなに小さな限られた地域においても、偉大な文化が大地と調和しながら存在しているのです。

——それはひしひしと感じます。ただの農村ではなく、農業をしながら何か世界に通用するものをつくりだす土壌がヴェネト地方にはあるのでしょう。この地はたくさんの有名な企業家を輩出しているわけですから。

ところで、ブリオン家の墓地を訪れる人々の中には、タイルや象牙を剥がしたり、壊していく心ない者たちがおり、20年以上たった今、メンテナンスをどうするかという問題が出てきていると思います。感心したのは、スカルパと組んでいた職人たちが、そのデータやサンプルをきちんと保存し、明日にでもすぐに修復できるようになっていることです。

ブリオン オープンにしていますので、訪問者の中には必ずそのような輩がいるものだと思わねばなりません。すでにキャンドル立てなどは盗まれてしまい、現在は完全なオリジナルのものではありません。今まで何回も修理の手を入れていますが、つねに管理をしていかなければならないと思います。村や県の文化財部門で保存と管理のために「スカルパ会議」のようなものを設ける動きがありますが、政治的な介入は反対です。現在は、管理を良くするために、墓地のそばに小さな案内所をつくりたいとは考えています。といっても、大げさなものではなく、ヴェネツィアのゴンドラ漕ぎのための番小屋のような、ごく控えめなものです。

(1996年9月27日：ミラノにて)

—The cemetery of the Brion Family is one of the most beautiful, poetic pieces of architecture in the world. And whereas most great tombs and mausoleums were constructed in the dim past, the Brion Cemetery is a product of our own age, of the present. Whenever I go to Europe I always make it a point to visit it, like a pilgrimage, and I never tire of seeing it because each time brings new surprises and fresh discoveries. As soon as I set foot on the grounds I feel a strong sense of vitality come welling up inside me.

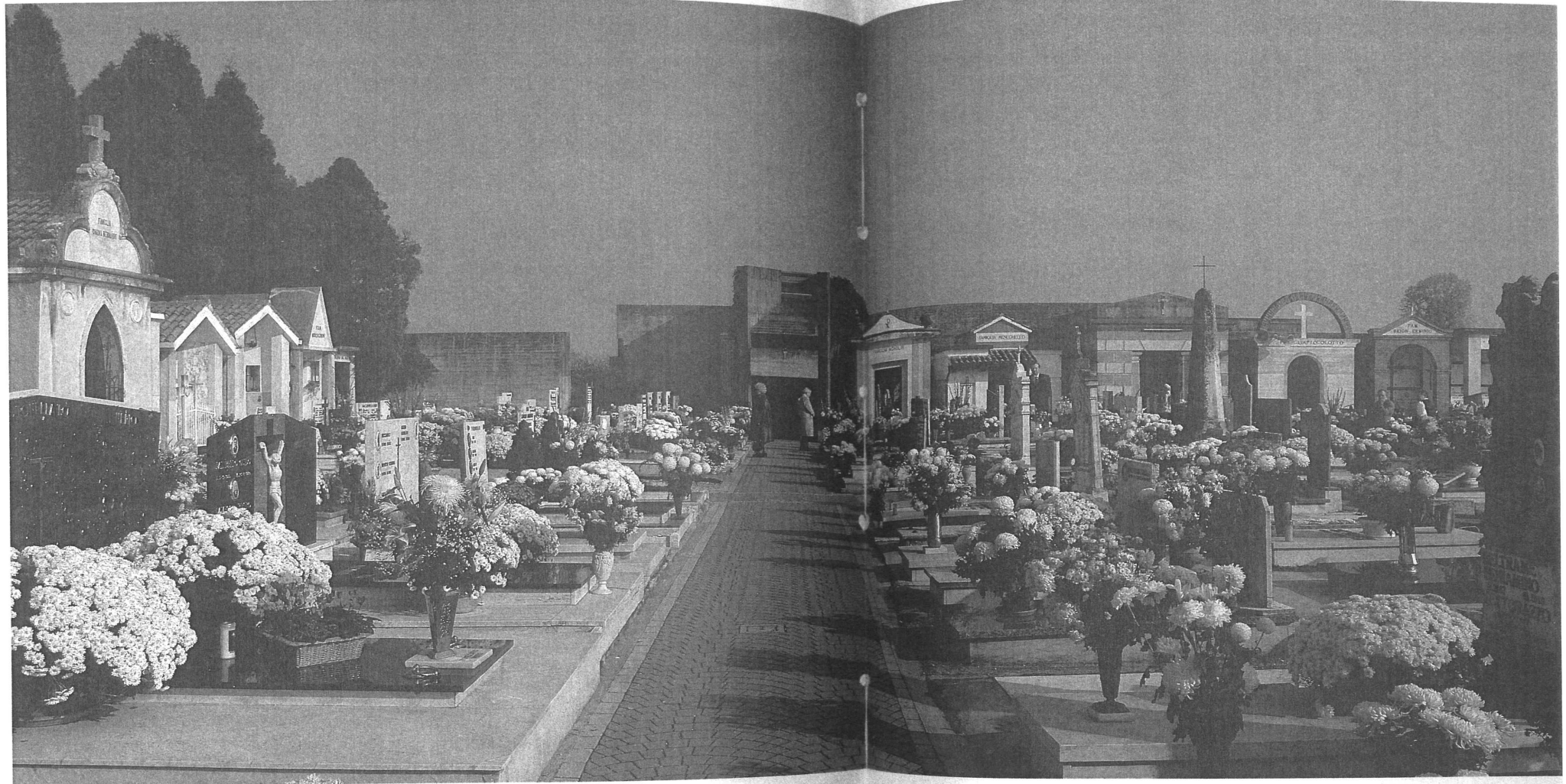
But history-making architecture cannot be attributed solely to the genius of the individual architect. The client is also an essential part of the process and his, or her presence imbues the piece of architecture with its own energy so that the piece itself is always a result of the symbiosis of client and architect. I have always had an enormous amount of respect for the Brion family for having commissioned Carlo Scarpa to design their family cemetery and I am very curious to find out more about you. I have always wanted to ask you what it was that led you to foster the creation of such a miraculous work.

Brion—The ancient architect Vitruvius once said that the client is like the father and the architect the mother of all great architecture. I think he was right about that one.

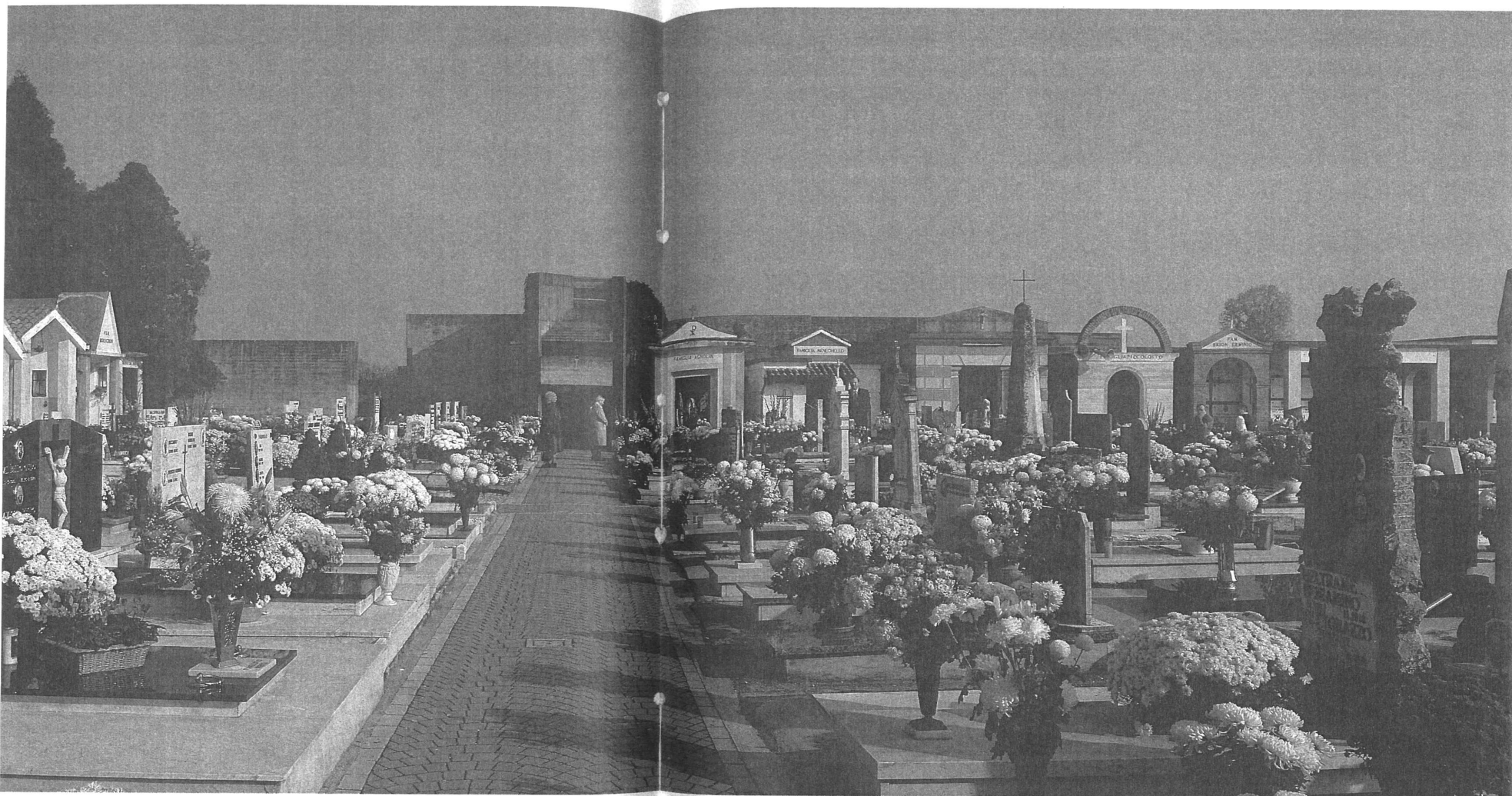
My family has always been a family of passionate connoisseurs of art. My parents taught me representational painting but architecture was always my favorite. My parents founded and ran the electrical appliance firm Brion Vega and I always felt that the products we created should not only be of high quality, but also should be well designed. So I recommended to my parents that they create their products in cooperation with designers. From that point on the history of Brion Vega has always been tied up with its designers.

This experience taught us that if you want good architecture you have to know how to plan and choose the right architect. If you lack the ability to choose a good architect you won't be able to establish a good harmonious relationship with them. Even more importantly, you have to have an eye for choosing architects who are appropriate for the particular theme you have in mind. No one, for example, would commission Carlo Scarpa to design a factory. But we needed a poet to design the 'tomb' that we had in mind. And we couldn't think of any architect more poetic than Scarpa.

At Brion Vega we commissioned a factory design from Marco Zanuso and product designs from Zanuso and other architects like Franco Albini,



村の共同墓地よりブリオン家墓地の入口棟を見る。
View towards the entrance wing of the Brion Cemetery from the village cemetery.



入口棟を見る。
of the Brion Cemetery from the village cemetery.

Achille Castiglioni, and Mario Bellini. But they were not the kind of architects one would want to design a tomb. Not just anyone is capable of coming up with the kind of sublime poetry you want in a tomb.

—So you mean to say that the tomb's design emerged as part of the corporate philosophy of Brion Vega. By the way, when did you first meet Scarpa, under what circumstances?

Brion—I first met him at the Veneto Pavilion at "Italia '61", for which Scarpa had done the installation. He was together with his wife Nini. At the time we just exchanged a few words, but from that point on I became fascinated with his architecture. I was a student majoring in economics but I started to see his works, like the Olivetti Showroom, the Italian Pavilion in Montreal in Canada, and the Castelvecchio Museum.

—So were you the one who chose Scarpa to design your father's tomb?

Brion—Yes I was. My father decided before he died that he wanted to be buried in the village of San Vito where he was born and raised. So he purchased a section of the cemetery in the village. I suggested that he commission Carlo Scarpa to design the tomb and my father agreed. The site was in one corner of the village cemetery where Scarpa himself now lies buried.

When my father passed away we commissioned Scarpa to design the cemetery just as we had planned. I was firmly convinced that Scarpa would design something beautiful for us and I started to think about what we might do to shelter it. At the time I was still very young and didn't know much about the building codes, but I happened across a newspaper article mentioning an Italian regulation forbidding any building within twenty-five meters of a highway, and I thought, this is it. So I spoke with my mother and we purchased a strip of land twenty-five meters wide in an L-shape which would serve to shelter my father's tomb site.

—That comes as quite a surprise. So that's how this cemetery came into existence. At 2200 square meters it was completely unprecedented in size and in shape

Brion—As I said, our original intent was to build the tomb in the village cemetery and then use the rest of the land just to provide protection for it. But the proposal that Scarpa came up with a few months later was basically the way it is now.

—What did you think of Scarpa's plan the first time you saw it?

Brion—I was incredibly excited. I took one look at the model that he had prepared and I knew that this would be a work of art. We were thinking of a normal tomb, but the tomb he designed for us completely surpassed our imagination. We felt that somehow this project integrated aspects from a number of cultures. It came out of the the foundation of our traditional culture, combined with the culture of the Orient and contemporary Western civilization. You can also see the influence of Japanese and Chinese culture, which probably comes from the fact that Scarpa had traveled to Japan and visited places like the Katsura Rikyu. He had great respect for Japanese culture and he was also very interested in the architecture of other Asian countries. In his own inimitable way he managed to incorporate all of these influences into his own work.

For example, there is an arch in the cemetery which also serves as a symbolic bridge. This kind of ambiguity is characteristic of Venice, where bridges are not just things you cross over but also things you row under as you navigate the canals. At the same time, the bridge has spiritual connotations as a way to the world beyond.

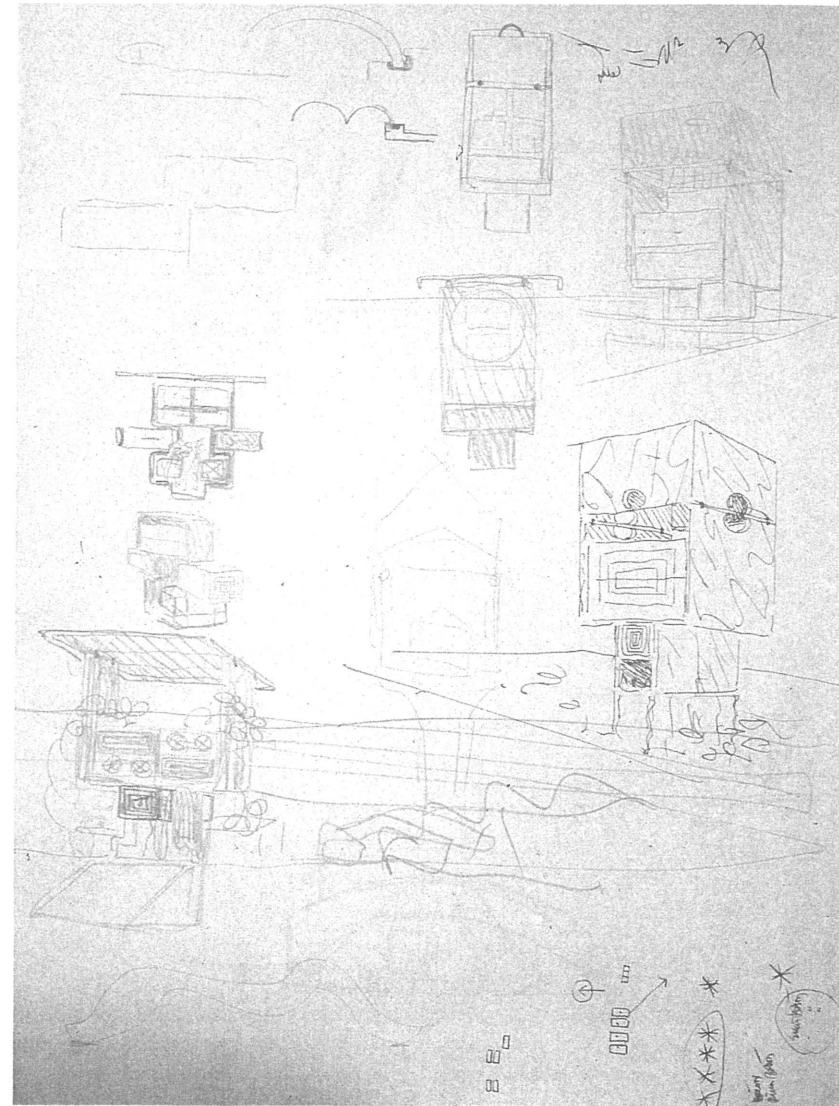
At that time Scarpa was living in Asolo, a hilltop town right next to San Vito where the cemetery is located. He told me that he used to dream about the design for the cemetery every night. For days on end he would get up out of bed each night and put his ideas down in sketches and plans. He once told me that this was a project which emerged from his dreams.

—Were there any parts of the first proposal that you disagreed with or asked him to change?

Brion—I was always in agreement with the core plan. I only asked for revisions on two points.

First I asked him to make one part of the wall a little lower whereas he had proposed that the L-shaped site be entirely surrounded by a high wall. It was the left-hand side of the entrance wing, where you go into the Brion Cemetery from the village cemetery. We had chosen this site because my father wanted to be buried along with his fellow townspeople and having such a high wall between them would have created too strong a separation. I also wanted it to have a slightly more open feeling.

Secondly, Scarpa wanted to have a small stream running beneath the arch in which my parents' sepulchers would be placed so they would seem to be floating on water. But I couldn't agree to this because I felt



墓の初期のアイデア/スカルパのスケッチブックより。
An initial idea of the tomb in Scarpa's sketchbook.

it would have been too pretentious in the context of the village cemetery.

We meant the chapel not just for our family's use but for the use of the entire village, but in fact they don't use it.

—How long was it from the time you commissioned the design until Scarpa made his presentation to you?

Brion—I think it was finished faster than any of Scarpa's projects. I don't remember exactly how long it took but it was no more than a few months. And then we started construction immediately. The basic designs and the execution designs both went extremely smoothly and before we knew it the surrounding wall was complete and the concrete construction was finished in about two years, although there were several details which took much longer. We hired a small construction firm in Treviso to do the work and they had five or six workers on the site everyday so that even the individual fixtures and appointments were always completed in a timely manner. So the construction went smoothly on the level of craftsmanship.

—I heard there were 1200 drawings for this work and that it took ten years from design to completion so I always assumed there was quite a bit of trial and error in the construction process. But it sounds like the initial construction went at a fairly fast pace. How much did you negotiate with Scarpa during the construction process? Could you tell us a little more about that?

Brion—We only asked for the two changes I mentioned earlier. As for the rest, we left it entirely up to him. Scarpa was free to work as he chose. But I think the most liberating aspect of the project for him was that he was completely free of restrictions and that there was no need for any electrical appliances at all.

He visited the construction site everyday and paid great attention to all the complicated details. For example he was always checking to make sure that the texture of the mold was clearly visible in the concrete so that it would appear light—as if it were made of wood. He wanted it to have the texture of tree bark. In order to achieve this texture he would make drawings in his house in Asolo and come to the construction site every day to explain what he wanted to the workers using models.

—What was the reaction of the villagers of San Vito to the construction process? It must have caused quite a stir since it was being built in the village cemetery.

Brion—More than anything we had to maintain our courage as we were building the cemetery. At the time a wave of communism and socialism was sweeping Italy and this kind of architecture was subject to all kinds of criticism. Paolo Portoghesi wrote that building this kind of architecture was just as reprehensible as buying a luxury yacht. We were also criticized by students at the Architectural Institute of Venice University. So of course the reaction of the villagers wasn't positive either. They could not understand culture expressed in this way.

In this context my mother Onorina maintained a steadfast position. But nevertheless she did make very prudent appeals to people. She was also the one who negotiated with Scarpa and I just tried to be as supportive as I could of her. I respect her very much.

In 1972 two of the great masters of Italian architecture, Ignazio Gardella and Franco Albini paid a visit to the cemetery and said they were greatly impressed. This served as a great encouragement for me. So I said to the villagers, "Just look. Now this project has educational significance. You may not understand it, but some of your children may come here to play and sketch it and be inspired to become architects." And now my prediction has come true.

—I've been here eight times already and sometimes I stay from before dawn until dusk. The villagers have always been very kind and approachable. I always get the impression that they are very proud of this piece of architecture—that they now see it as a great asset for the village. So it does look like things have worked out as you said they would.

Brion—At the time the villagers were quite unkind, but that was not entirely their fault. It was the fault of the social conditions. The conditions in Italy at the time were probably unimaginable in Japan. Everyone thought that architecture could only be justified if it served the masses. But as time passed the people in the village have come to see this cemetery as the great work of art that it is.

—It is far from the station and quite difficult to access, but nonetheless it has become a great tourist attraction in recent years. People come here from all over the world, and not just people in architecture but all kinds of people come here, to this tiny village of San Vito to visit the tomb of a single family—a place with no connections whatsoever to the world of commercialism. Dozens of people come here every day as if drawn by a magnet.

Brion—I think this is the only piece of contemporary architecture that culls from the tradition of Italian culture. I always compare this work by Scarpa with the Fallingwater House of Frank Lloyd Wright. These are two works which are very important to me. They both have an enormous appeal. The Brion Cemetery and the Fallingwater House are complete opposites, like a study in contrasts. Whereas the Fallingwater House is a space about 'life', the Brion Cemetery is about 'death'. The Fallingwater House is completely designed for human beings. Bathed in the light of the sun and the moon, the rain, the wind and the snow, nature coexists with the flow of human time. In that beautiful setting, so vibrant with the sounds of water, people are literally wrapped up in and nurtured by nature. It is overflowing with the spirit of life.

The Brion Cemetery, on the other hand, crystallizes our thoughts about death in a natural setting. More than a space for human lives, it is a space for the human soul. This is what Scarpa has left us: a work of art in the form of architecture. So it enters deep into our souls to move us like a beautiful symphony. This is why so many people come to see it. Before we knew it the Brion Cemetery had become a work of architecture of historic importance and Carlo Scarpa a legendary figure.

—How did you perceive Carlo Scarpa as a person?

Brion—I think only people who knew Scarpa personally can really understand him. He was always keenly interested in and responsive to the world around him and he was very particular. Never in my life have I known anyone like him. He was able to create a whole universe out of even the smallest thing. In a word, he was a great poet.

But he also suffered a great deal precisely because he was a poet. His days were full of anguish and I think that it was only after his death that life began to treat him kindly. He had no academic degrees but after he died he was awarded an honorary doctorate. Scarpa spent most of his life in Venice but there were times when he was not recognized as an architect and in his later years he finally moved on to Asolo and then to Vicenza. After that he never returned to Venice. He lived his life surrounded by both resentment and adoration. Those who appreciated his struggles and commissioned architecture from him were a select group of people with extraordinary sensibilities and a keen aesthetic sense. My mother Onorina knew Scarpa very well and was very close to him. I am very proud of that fact.

Scarpa never hesitated to tell even his most distinguished clients

that only he could do the job they wanted. He had utter confidence in his own sensibilities. He did not approach his work as a mere job, but always tried to create works which expressed his own sensibilities while meeting the requests of his clients. This stance was a result of the close connections he maintained with the Venetian craftsmen with whom he collaborated throughout his life.

—It seems very important that for generations Venice has had a community of craftsmen who are capable of carrying out Scarpa's exacting details and producing the kind of textures he wanted. The more contact I have with Venetian culture the more convinced I become that the city is a veritable treasure house. For centuries Venice has had gorgeous, overpowering details, textures and proportions which make foreigners like us gasp for wonder. And these are not only architectural and artistic items, but also entirely quotidian objects, even the most pedestrian of machines seem alive with beauty. Looking at the ancient printing presses on display at the Correr Museum in Venice, which Scarpa remodeled, one can't help but see in them a kind of Scarpa-like detail. Some people consider Scarpa an architect with a craftsman-like obsessive attention to detail. But once you step foot into the Veneto region around Venice, it becomes totally clear that he was not just some nut,—you will pardon the expression—who appeared out of nowhere producing perfect works. He took an aesthetic sensibility that had a history and a firm grounding in the local culture and adapted it for his own, contemporary expression.

Brion—The Veneto region is an incredibly warm-spirited, generous place. It is a place where nature, human beings, and culture are in incredible harmony. This comes from the fact that the area was once a nation unto itself, the Republic of Venice. Even a single dish of the local cuisine will have an enormous variety of ingredients, but they will all be in utter harmony. This is true from the most humbly understated pasta fagioli or risotto (pasta or risotto made with kidney beans) to the kind of outrageous pasta dishes served by a place like Harry's Bar.

Venetians are famous for their entrepreneurship. That's why they used to refer to the Merchants of Venice. The Republic of Venice arose out of a community of people like this, so it was especially important to work to maintain balance and harmony. You can say the same thing even about the Village of San Vito where the Brion Cemetery is located. It is very close to the Villa Maser built by Palladio and just fifteen kilometers from there is the town of Possagno, birthplace of the neoclassical sculptor

Antonio Canova and now home to the Canova Museum, designed by Scarpa. Even such a tiny area is overflowing with magnificent culture in perfect harmony with the environment.

—You really do get a sense of that. The Veneto Region is not just a collection of farming villages. They are all involved in the creation of world culture. The area has also produced quite a number of famous entrepreneurs.

Unfortunately some people who visit the Brion Cemetery have seen fit to destroy parts of it by taking pieces of the tile or the inlay with them. Now that twenty years have passed since its completion maintenance must be a problem. But I was very impressed to learn that the craftsmen who worked with Scarpa have preserved his data and samples so that they can immediately repair any damages in an authentic manner.

Brion—We keep it open to the public so you are always going to have some vandalism. We have already had things like candle holders stolen so that it is no longer in its original pristine condition. We have done many repairs in the past, but it does require constant maintenance. Some people in the cultural properties departments of the village and provincial governments have suggested creating a kind of ‘Scarpa Conference’ to oversee the preservation and maintenance. But I am opposed to political intervention. At present we are thinking of building a small information booth at the entrance which would help to improve maintenance. Of course it wouldn’t be anything major, just an inconspicuous structure like the small logdes for the gondola rowers in Venice.

(September 27th, 1996/at Milan)