

# CEREAL

In this volume, we delve into the subject of **legacy**. We explore the architecture of **Gio Ponti** and **Carlo Scarpa**, the art of **Joan Miró**, and the photography of **Fan Ho**. We spend the day with **Rupi Kaur**, discuss design with **Jonathan Anderson**, and present an autumn style edit at **Kettle's Yard**.

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IMPOSSIBLE  
BEAUTY

*Carlo Scarpa's  
Brion Tomb*

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CARLO SCARPA — *When my time comes, cover me with these words, because I am a man of Byzantium who came to Venice by way of Greece.*

Carlo Scarpa was born in Venice in 1906. Known for a deeply sensitive style of architecture, blending then-contemporary modernism with traditional Venetian craft, Scarpa worked in relative obscurity throughout his life, mostly building within his home region of Veneto. But his reputation stands as an architect's architect, a man of few words, brimming with brilliant ideas and technical prowess. His would be a legacy to lie in wait, only to be discovered post-mortem.

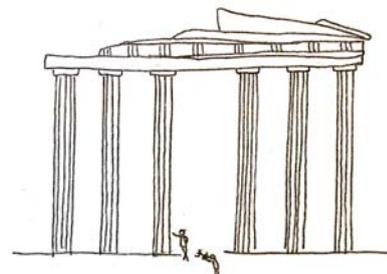
His final and arguably most revered work sits in a serene stretch of farmland halfway between Venice and the jagged, snow-capped peaks of the Dolomites. The Brion Tomb is the final resting place of Onorina and Giuseppe Brion, founders of the Brionvega electronics company. It was commissioned by Onorina in 1968, shortly after the death of Giuseppe, and Scarpa spent a decade developing and perfecting the cemetery.

When I mentioned to an architect friend that I was going to Brion, he told me about his first visit to the tomb. He had been overcome with a reaction he had never felt before, which he could only describe as that of Stendhal Syndrome: symptoms including dizziness, fainting and tears, experienced when confronting something of impossible beauty.

Scarpa envisioned Brion as part fortress, part city park, a gathering place for the residents of nearby town San Vito di Altivole. He saw the sprawling complex as a place where people could picnic and play: living beings hosted by a city of the dead. Organised in an L-shape that wraps around a public cemetery on the north and east sides, the tomb is composed of a series of separate but connected structures — the Propylaea, the Meditation Pavilion, the Arcosolium and the Chapel — buffered by wide swathes of grass and water, and surrounded by a retaining wall that abuts a farmer's field.

Accessed through the public cemetery, the Propylaea marks the threshold of the tomb. Two interlocking circles, cut into the concrete wall, announce the infinite nature of the Brions' union. To the right, along a short path, sits the Meditation

Pavilion, floating atop a reflecting pond. The hooded wooden structure, held aloft by stilts, peers out over the water to a sloped, grassy lawn. Here, the interlocking circles appear once more in the form of a small cutaway, that when lined up just so, frames the Arcosolium where the couple lie. Named for early Christian catacombs where martyrs were laid to rest, the Arcosolium is a many-layered arch, which Scarpa based on the shape of a Venetian footbridge. Beneath its gentle curve,



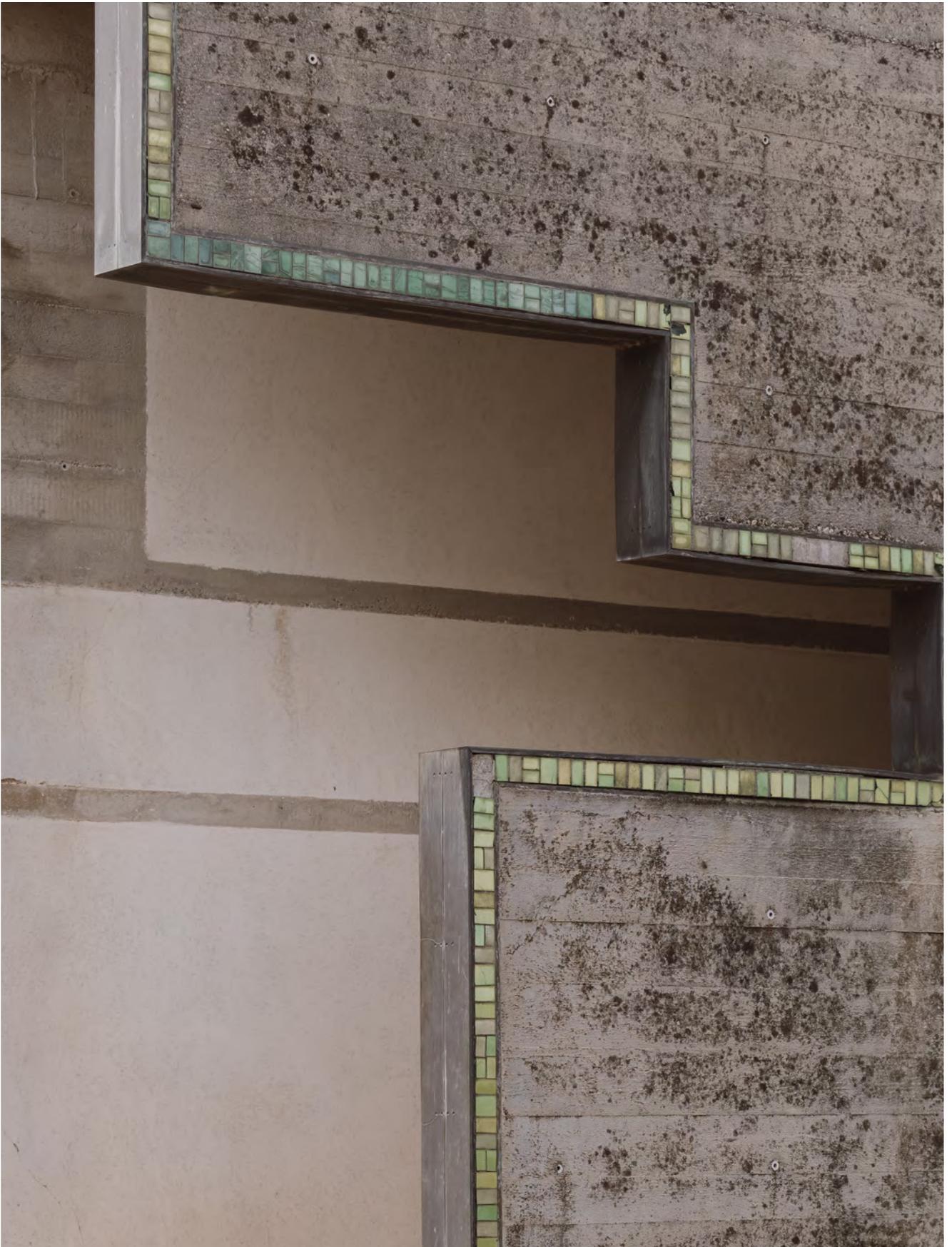
matching tombs inlaid with ebony and ivory lean ever so slightly towards one another, seeming to strain against an unseen force. A faintly glimmering patchwork of glass tiles adorns the arch's underside, reflecting light like stirring water. Adjacent, a pitched canopy shelters a series of family graves.

From there, the Chapel comes into view, a half-drowned ruin, rising from a pond. This is where the sprawling tomb's visual themes unite: a stepped roof like a towering ziggurat; a circle sliced into the wall; a speckling of minuscule doors punched into the building's skin, allowing light reflected from the water to animate the pressed concrete. The stark, grey structure is softened by each carefully rendered detail. Outside, orange-bellied koi slip and dart beneath the leaves of lotus flowers while far off, droning tractors perform their score.

So much of Scarpa's birthplace is legible in the design of the tomb: the shimmering mosaics of Murano glass tiles, intricately moulded brass hardware, mystifying paths, and submerged alleys. As much as earth and concrete shape the space, water remains the ultimate conduit

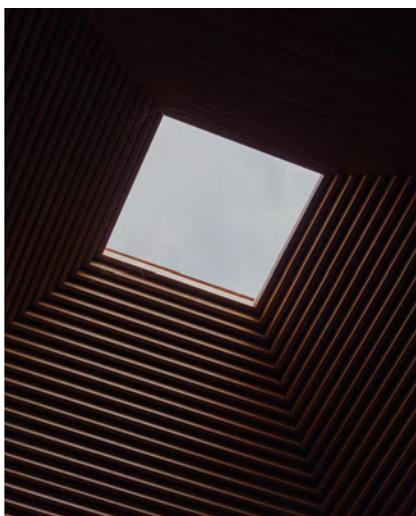
#### Propylaea

The monumental entranceway to Brion Tomb takes its name from the structures found in Ancient Greek architecture, the preeminent example being the entranceway to the ancient Athenian Acropolis. Built in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE on orders of the statesman Pericles, the Propylaea presents a six-columned Doric facade, built in ratios that echo the eight-columned Parthenon inside.





between elements. Narrow channels, pressed into the earth like crop circles, communicate between the pavilions like Venice's watery thoroughfares. Wandering the grounds, I speculate that only a man whose logical and artistic faculties were formed by such a city could have imagined a plan so implausible — or so beautiful.



Venice's is not the only influence. There are shades of Brutalism. There are whiffs of the Baroque. But not the Gothic-tinged quatrefoils and Byzantine loggias of the Venetian style. Scarpa mined references, funerary or otherwise, from cultures far and wide. The stepped details complicating walls and expanding corners are reminiscent of ancient Aztec monuments; their strict right angles forcing the facade to rearrange itself with each passing cloud, throwing shadows that stretch or shrink with each hour, each season.

Scarpa's well-documented relationship with Japan, too, is written on the walls. *Shōji* paper room dividers are imitated in plaster and brass, while stepping stones leading across water call to mind *roji*, the ornate paths typical of Japanese tea gardens. The arrangement ensures each step is taken with careful intention, readying the mind and body for whatever lies at the end of the journey.

Scarpa's life, in fact, ended in Japan. On a trip to Sendai in 1978, he lost his balance and fell down a set of concrete stairs, joining an unlucky group of his peers who met similarly sudden and somewhat violent ends. Though the Brion Tomb was technically finished at that point, he had continued to tweak and modify the design right up until the end. He considered Brion to be his greatest masterpiece.

The Brion Tomb is where Scarpa laid his genius to rest: a catalogue of influences and a brilliant, almost mystical assemblage of his singular architectural ideas; the accumulated devotions of a man who dedicated his life to his craft. A final masterwork. He is buried there, at Brion. It is said he was interred in the style of a knight: upright beneath the gravestone bearing his name, wrapped in linen, standing sentinel over his final opus. •

#### Notable Modernist Deaths

Carlo Scarpa was not the only modernist architect to meet a rather sudden end. Le Corbusier drowned while swimming from his *cabanon* at Cap Martin on the Côte d'Azur. Antoni Gaudí was run over by a tram on the streets of Barcelona, on his daily excursion for confession from his workshop in the Sagrada Família. And Louis Kahn suffered a heart attack while in a restroom in Penn Station, Manhattan.