

side of the independence of the Baltic and other republics of the U.S.S.R., that this could lead to a civil war in Russia, or do you think that the Soviet population will accept a re-Stalinization?

Goult-Liiv: If Yeltsin continues the action he has started in Estonia to its last consequences, Gorbachov will have to either retreat or else unleash a war which would indeed be a civil war. If he retreats now, he will find himself very much weakened. We should not forget that Yeltsin's aim is to eliminate Gorbachov politically, since he has been humiliated by the latter many times.

EIR: How do you evaluate the Soviet economic situation? Some sources report that the situation is dramatic, that it could drive as many as several million Russians outside of the Soviet Union to find food in neighboring countries or in Western Europe. Recently however, the organization Physicians Without Borders came back from a trip to Russia, saying that this situation had been largely exaggerated and that while there were shortages of food, one could not speak of a near-famine situation.

Goult-Liiv: I do not know what areas of the country the Physicians Without Borders visited. I can tell you there is no famine in the Baltic states. The shops are empty but people are not hungry. In Russia, the large cities are privileged, because they benefit from a whole system of colonial looting, but in the countryside, which is very depopulated, the situation is catastrophic and "famine" is the right term to explain this situation. It is not evident either that the food aid granted to the Soviets is getting to such places. I see it quite well being directed toward Moscow.

EIR: According to certain sources, Russians go over the borders to Estonia to steal food.

Goult-Liiv: Indeed, there are Russians coming over the border to steal food, and as soon as one goes over the border from Estonia into the Soviet Union, the difference in living standards between both countries is very striking. It's even more striking when you see the old Estonian cities which were annexed by Russia, which at the end of the war had the same living standards as Estonia, and to see how miserable they have become.

EIR: Over the last few days, the Bush administration made some statements against the Soviet invasion. Do you expect any significant move in your favor from the U.S. or Europe?

Goult-Liiv: From Bush, not too much. He will only ask from Gorbachov to act more discreetly, because what happened in Lithuania is nonetheless a stab in the Bush's back, so they must not have exchanged gentle words. It is in Europe that a mobilization can occur. The country most sensitive to what can happen in the Soviet Union is united Germany, which has the most to fear from a civil war in the U.S.S.R. Germany has an enormous weight in Europe.

Book Review

More about a true cultural hero

by Nora Hamerman

Filippo Brunelleschi: The Early Works and the Medieval Tradition

by Heinrich Klotz

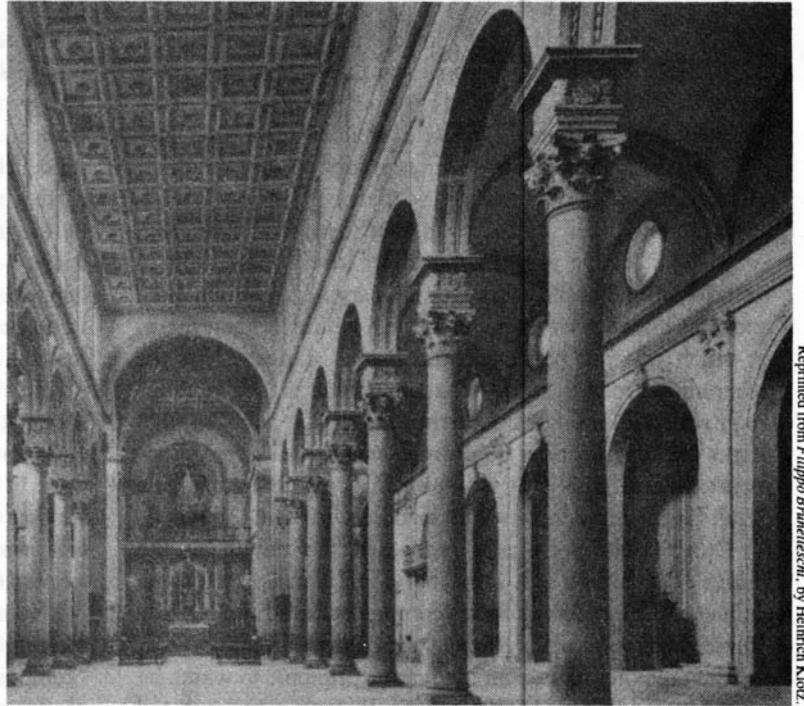
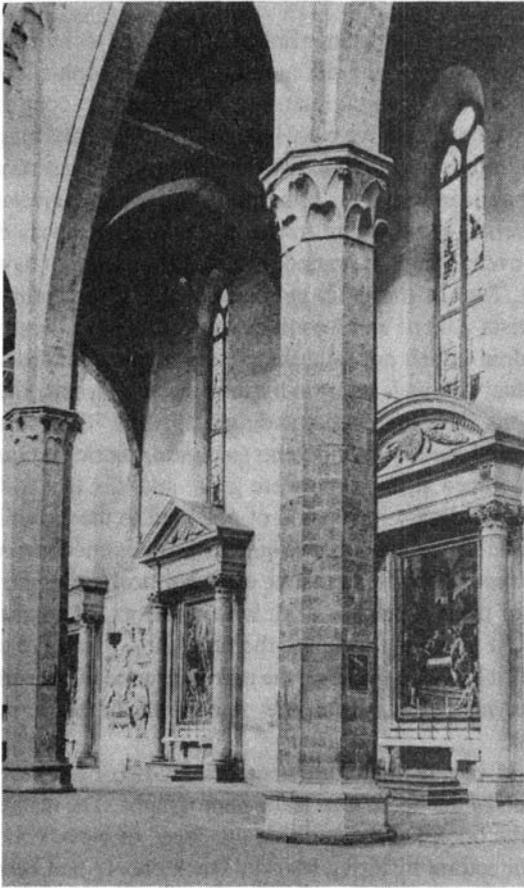
Rizzoli International Publications, New York, 1990

184 pages, illustrated, hardbound, \$45

At first glance, this appears to be the classic "coffee table book," but that's not what it is. Printed on heavy coated stock, the numerous illustrations are sharp and clear, the large typeface very readable. But this is actually quite an academic book, and for this reviewer, that speaks both for it and against it. For it, in the sense that it contains some real scholarship and not a pileup of opinions as too often characterizes books about legendary geniuses like Brunelleschi; against it, insofar as Klotz fails to touch upon some of the key issues in Brunelleschi, and presumes a surprisingly narrow readership. It was originally published from Dr. Klotz's post-doctoral thesis "on the recommendation of the Arts Faculty of the University of Göttingen," and has been translated, very ably by the way, by Hugh Keith.

All the hallmarks of the German school of architectural history are there, including the minute attention to detail, and unfortunately if you are a novice appreciator of the great Florentine architect, there are no concessions to those not initiated into the technical language and concerns of the trained architectural historian. Thus, this is not the book to buy as your family's "first" book on Brunelleschi. It does not repeat the famous anecdotes about Brunelleschi's hubristic personality, offers no particular theory about how the dazzling accomplishment which was the dome of Florence Cathedral (featured on the cover) was "really" built, does not situate Brunelleschi in the broad context of the history of the Renaissance as one of the seminal geniuses who made it all come about, and does not even cover all of his work.

Indeed, there are not even the normal courtesies to help the reader thread his way through Professor Klotz's often intricate arguments. For example: He develops at length the



Reprinted from *Filippo Brunelleschi*, by Heinrich Klotz

Left: Octagonal pillars in the 14th-century nave of Florence Cathedral. Note the “crystalline” sharp edges, and the high plinth and base, which no longer functions as a “foot.” Above: Nave arcade of San Lorenzo in Florence, by Brunelleschi, early 15th century. The column returns to the classical concept: “an Attic base on which there stands a full, rounded shaft tapering towards the top and to which the entasis gives a graceful upward movement, perceived by the eye as an ascending growth from the foot to the head, i.e., the capital.”

idea that Brunelleschi did not think of the architrave as a “framing” member but strictly as a horizontal element, and was therefore quite angry when a later architect, hired to modify his design for the Ospedale degli Innocenti (Foundlings’ Hospital) of Florence, “wrapped” the architrave around the corner and continued it vertically down the outer side of the wall. The aforesaid interloper, one Francesco della Luna, took as the “authority” for this design change, the Baptistery, a much-revered local building dating from several centuries earlier. To absorb this argument you have to know what an architrave is, and if that does not slow you down, you must hunt through the book to find the photographs of the relevant architraves of the Florentine Baptistery and of the Innocenti, so as to compare them. The photographs are not always close to their references in the text, but clumped together, and one has to go hunting for them. The reader has to work so hard figuring this all out, that you might come off with a feeling of accomplishment, but there is the danger that many will give up in the process.

Dr. Klotz’s conceptual point is actually a good one (he has more than one, but I will mention the one I most appreciated, personally). Through this painfully detailed account of Brunelleschi’s designing of each individual element of his buildings, he brings out a quality of the architect’s courage and heroism, his unflinching commitment to principle, which

ends up being more convincing and moving than all the famous anecdotes. Especially so as Klotz proves that the next generation of architects, exponents of the new Renaissance style that Brunelleschi developed, such as Michelozzo, the Medici family favorite, or Leon Battista Alberti, the humanist architect and great theorist of Renaissance art, were much more “flexible” about such details. Brunelleschi, Klotz convinces us, cared passionately about every single “note” in his compositions, and nothing could be accidental, nothing essential could be compromised. And thus like Beethoven, he left his indelible mark on universal history.

Take the example of the column, which was, as Klotz says in the first sentence of the book, “an architectural metaphor of the human form: The base is the foot, the shaft the trunk, the capital the head.” As demonstrated in the photographs, before Brunelleschi (who was born in 1377, and began building in the early 15th century) the Florentine supporting member was characteristically a sharp-edged octagonal pillar, which had a “crystal like rigidity.” It was Brunelleschi who restored the anthropomorphically defined proportions of the column of the classical Greek tradition, and restored the round column, to which the beautiful concept of “entasis” could be applied—the Greek principle of a subtle, almost imperceptible curvature instead of rigidly straight sides, which endows the column with an organic

quality and yet is perceived by the eye as optically straight.

Brunelleschi, Klotz demonstrates, revolutionized every part of the column, restoring its classical meaning as a “metaphor of the human form.” The base, which in the 14th-century Cathedral of Florence was almost as high as your shoulder, was brought back down to earth, so that no plinth in a Brunelleschi column ever stands any higher than your shoe. And every detail of the capitals, the decorative friezes, and so forth by Brunelleschi, wherever the carving was completed under his direct supervision, is imbued with an organic quality which was not present in the Gothic. Indeed, it is the coherent return to the unique human person as the “module” upon which all architecture and urban design is based, that marks the superiority of the Renaissance style—created, almost single-handedly, by Brunelleschi—over the great feats of the Gothic builders to which he otherwise owed so much.

Brunelleschi personally embodied the notion of the *unique* contribution of a great individual mind. In the same chapter on the column, Klotz comments on Brunelleschi’s simple innovation of having put the column on the ground, and then making it “into an innovative principle to which he consistently adhered” in all his work. Brunelleschi “replaced the decorative imagination of the 13th century with an extremely restricted range of virtually constant basic forms. What he sought was the essential rather than the free play of forms; and he had to ensure that the new language he created was sufficiently consistent to be mandatory. Despite its variety, his work, like everything revolutionary, has certain dogmatic features. But even if Brunelleschi retained his vocabulary as far as possible unchanged, once it had been established, he seldom repeated himself.” The lack of any theoretical work written by Brunelleschi is more than compensated by “the canonic tendencies which his buildings reveal.”

The Foundlings’ Hospital in Florence

One chapter of this book deals with the Ospedale degli Innocenti, the Foundlings’ Hospital in Florence, which was Brunelleschi’s first large-scale architectural commission, and involved the creation of not just a building but an entire square surrounding the Church of the Annunziata, and looking toward the dome of the Cathedral. This was not really a hospital, but an orphanage which took in, and raised, abandoned children. This was financed by the Arte della Seta, the silk guild. Klotz does not deal at all with the social context of this enterprise, but one can hardly grasp the significance of the project without situating it thusly. In the 1420s, the concept of the republic was being polemically elaborated by local thinkers in Augustinian-Platonic tradition such as Leonardo Bruni, who eloquently argued that in a republic, as opposed to a state ruled by a prince, every individual regardless of birth could potentially enter into the service of the commonwealth, the highest human calling, if that individual showed talent, industry, and virtue. The decision

by the economic power center linked to the most technically progressive industry—the silk industry relied on sophisticated agriculture and “capital intensive” machines, in contrast to the more labor-intensive wool industry—to build this magnificent building thus functions as a kind of practical assertion of the republican ideal. In principle a foundling, rejected by the parents, could aspire to rise to the highest levels of society—even though in practice this does not seem to have happened. Two of the great geniuses of the 15th century, Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci, were illegitimate children (albeit not foundlings) and the new emphasis on individual genius is attested by their success despite that social stigma. It is my understanding that some 70% of the children abandoned by their parents (including patrician families) in Florence at that time were girls, and this fact adds another extraordinary dimension of potential to the republican principle, in an era when women were not encouraged to learn to read and write, let alone exert political leadership.

None of these aspects is dealt with by Klotz, of course. Therefore, if you want to know the real story, you have to “compose” it by cross-gridding the narrowly conceived work of various historians, from the standpoint of universal history.

I should like to mention, nonetheless, two other very useful facets of the book. One is the photographs. The instant I opened the book I suspected that the “eye” of New York-based architectural historian Marvin Trachtenberg had been involved in the photography, and indeed he played a role in taking some of the “non-standard” views of Florentine buildings which contribute to making the book different, in a useful way, from the coffee-table genre of book on Brunelleschi. Klotz warns us that all photographs of architecture are false, because they are partial views of three dimensional buildings which we experience in space and in motion; yet just as “frozen” slices of organic material under a microscope will yield some useful information to the biologist, these new photos “freeze” parts of Brunelleschi’s work in a way very useful for the kind of analytical work Klotz likes to do.

Another fascinating window is opened by Klotz on an “outside” influence on Brunelleschi, outside of Florence, and that is Padua, the university town in Northern Italy (neighboring Venice) which had close intellectual and apparently, economic, ties to Florence in the early 15th century. When you consider that Alberti, Nicolaus of Cusa—the great German religious leader and scientist—and Paolo Toscanelli, who reputedly taught Brunelleschi mathematics, were all young students in Padua in the early 1420s; that Petrarch, the poet who was in many respects the father of the humanistic Renaissance of Florence, had lived there in the late 1300s; and that the scheme which later blossomed as the Council of Ferrara-Florence must have been partially first discussed in Padua, the idea that Brunelleschi found a source for his architectural innovations in Padua is most suggestive.