

[...]

This observing and reflecting on the features of one's 'own' side of the street, in proximate and saturated detail, is prompted by, as much as the visual interest inherent to the features themselves, the absence of a typical frontal view of the city ahead. Instead, in its place, there is only the continuation of the portico – often as far as the eye can see, to where it curves away, or where it finishes with a small, bright, arc-shaped lens as the corridor breaks to meet an open space. But this obscuring of a frontal view also sets up a shift in perspective to the side, an “oblique” view, as architecture historian Naomi Miller describes it, over to the other side of the street. With it, comes the possibility to project upon the relative nature of the opposite corridor – its features, character and light – and imagine one's own place and experience inside of it.

Sometimes the other side of the street might be far away: separated perhaps by a dense volume of rising midsummer dawn air, or alternatively by a space that whilst not that wide, in its sounds, movements and gestures, completely unrelated in character. At other times, whether in physical real-space, or imagined-perceived space, the other side of the street is much closer. It isn't just a visual experience under the porticoes, then, it's a profoundly sensory and physical one too – where one is made acutely aware of space, one's conception of it, and one's placement within it. Morandi's works correlate to these choreographies perfectly: sometimes objects are spaced apart, contained in their own atmosphere; at other times, in British painter Michael Craig-Martin's words, they are pushed up against one another “as if the air had been sucked out between”. Often, their relationship is uncertain, they are almost, but not quite, touching – appearing at once to be both quietly repelling one another and nudging gently towards.

In as much as setting up this particular oblique 'view' the shift in perspective prompted by the porticoes also necessitates a sideways *movement*. The supports of the arches act like markers; I am aware of my movement in one direction by their intervals. And so too, I am aware of their equivalents on the other side of the street: these two sets of verticals are constantly interacting – closing up quickly so as one in front of the other, then a moment later equidistant. One side might seem to slip past slightly quicker, or sometimes it might appear to slide past, slowly, in the opposite direction. Closer to the city centre, where the large civic buildings dominate, and where the streets are comparatively narrow, this feeling is particularly tangible. There's a sense of it sometimes in Morandi's paintings – quite different to the quickness of movement suggested in others – in which scale is subverted, and lumbering architectonic forms, creaking and sliding from an internal inertia, meet and pass in the midst of a chalky temporal landscape.

---

References:

Miller, Naomi: *Renaissance Bologna* (Lang, 1989)

Coldwell, Paul: *Morandi's Legacy: Influences on British Art* (Phillip Wilson, 2006)

---