In the last years, the crisis of a certain type of architecture is making evident those structural fragilities that the euphoria climate of the years 1990-2000 had caused to be underestimated at the time of its fortune. Deconstruction, the celebration of the “weak thought”, the manneristic triumph of form and the renunciation to any control of urban phenomena, are just some of the critical factors to be attributed to the current season of architecture, in which less and less architects recognize. While the last “masters” – the so-called “archistar” – decline, prisoners of their own celebrity (and self-referentiality) the theoretical gaze turns its attention to those exempla derived from history, which seem – contrary to so much contemporary architecture – to contain an inexhaustible source of knowledge.

From this reasoning, namely that the ancient city is neither a mere archaeological sedimentation nor a pure reservoir of forms, begins the volume Pompeji by Federica Visconti, which systematizes a series of researches on the archaeological city conducted on various occasions by the author. For a long time Pompeii, also due to the events related to its “discovery”, in 1748, and the subsequent excavations, was confined within the areas of expertise of restoration and archeology; in recent years, however, with the multiplication of specialized studies, even the design disciplines have begun to reappraise the architectural heritage of the city, recognizing in it a design paradigm of most of the architecture of the Masters; from Mies van der Rohe to Kahn, in fact, almost all modern architects have tried to answer the contingent problems of the project by analyzing the ancient times. This aspect shows that even the ancient city is not a monolithic episode but contains different antiques, ancestral mirrors related to its “discovery”, in 1748, and the subsequent excavations, was confined within the areas of expertise of restoration and archeology; in recent years, however, with the multiplication of specialized studies, even the design disciplines have begun to reappraise the architectural heritage of the city, recognizing in it a design paradigm of most of the architecture of the Masters; from Mies van der Rohe to Kahn, in fact, almost all modern architects have tried to answer the contingent problems of the project by analyzing the ancient times. This aspect shows that even the ancient city is not a monolithic episode but contains different antiques, ancestral mirrors of contemporary times: if indeed the classicism admired by Mies translates a typically early 1900s vision, the enigmatic complexes of late antiquity, in the wake of which Kahn’s research moves, reflect the concerns of the post-World War II period.

With the “crisis” of a certain idea of the modern city, in recent years, more attention has been given to the problems of morphology and typology in relation to historical tissues; naturally, much of this researches reflect the different orientations present in the national panorama, within which the many forms of antiquity are investigated in a critical light, linked to the dynamics of the project. Visconti’s Pompeii...