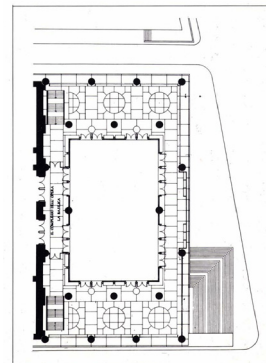
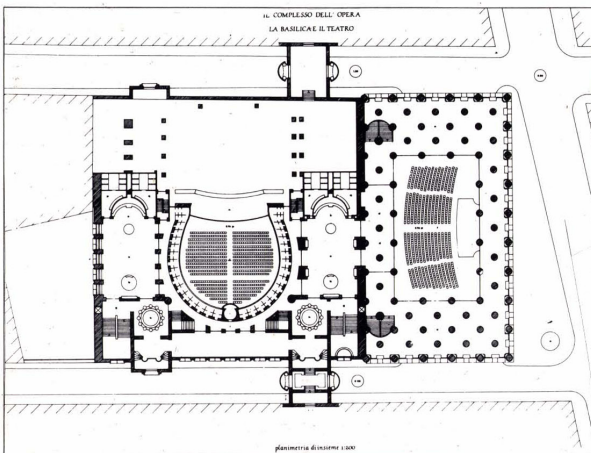
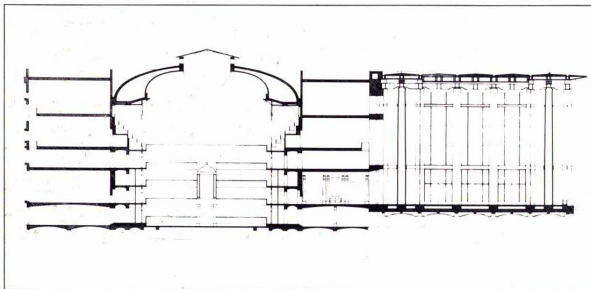
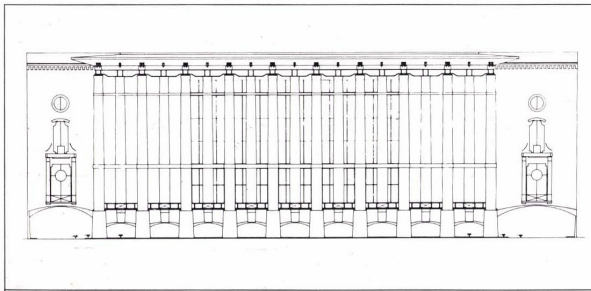


*Ludovico Quaroni: Rome Opera House Project Extension, 1983.
Elevation, Section, Floor Plans
Source: Ciorra 1989.*



“To be more free”– 2. A “late (ancient)” project by Ludovico Quaroni: the Opera House in Rome

LUCIO VALERIO BARBERA¹

Abstract: The Project by Ludovico Quaroni for the Opera House in Rome (1983) thrusts his conception within his ancient project of the Piazza Imperiale for E42 (with Saverio Muratori and Francesco Fariello, 1937), using the elongated proportions and small intercolumniation typical of the Eastern Hellenistic phase of architecture. Reasoning with the drawing, as Vincenzo Fasolo taught us to, with ancient monuments.

Keywords: Persepolis, Karnak, Palmyra, Temple of Bel, Vincenzo Fasolo.

The Order chosen for the Opera House Project (1983) thrusts his – Quaroni’s – conception within the ancient project of the Piazza Imperiale (1937), naturally, already using the elongated proportions and small intercolumniation and repetitive obsession typical of the Eastern Hellenistic phase of architecture. Ludovico’s direct experience in the East is present in the Opera House. So you cannot but notice a treatment of the Order which recalls the columns of Persepolis, their height obtained additively, that he, Ludovico, uses in the entablature, formed by the vertical sum of the excess portions and even in contradiction to the structural function. There is then, the protagonist, Palmyrene architecture, where the ancient Greco-Roman architecture definitely abandons classicality, pushing to an extreme – and beyond – its principles and its proportions, contaminating forms and typologies with urban and oriental architectural proportions, forms and types to the point one would think that in Palmira Quaroni had found the metaphorical representation – or if you prefer, anticipated and historized – of his own way of thinking about architecture in the city, contamination of the, classical, western conceptual rigor and the fascination of the oriental city in which the current fabric becomes an endless tapestry and the monumental elements – the “emergent” – themselves tend to be woven in superhuman scale, architectural voids – roads and fences – and solids,

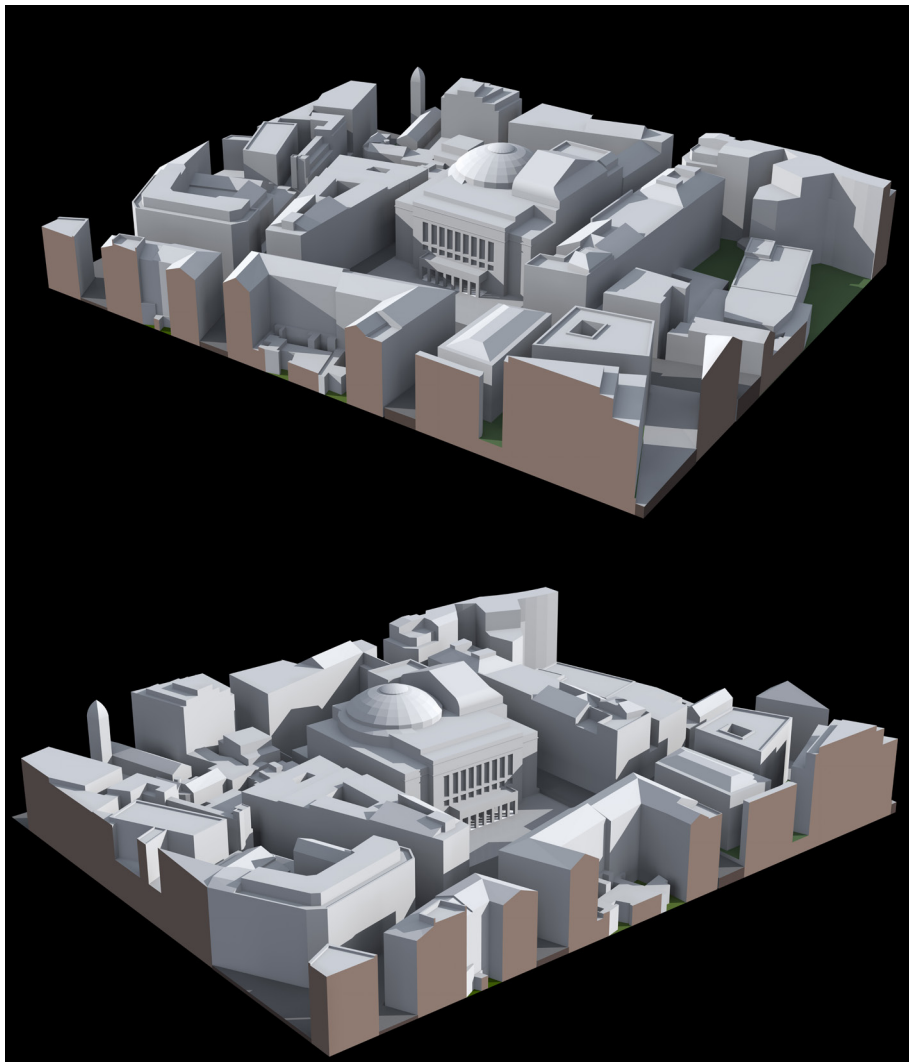
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especially ruins, create landscapes of incredible depth and complexity. And mystery. And in this depth, which in architecture is always shadow and bewilderment, as a mysterically evoked entity, in the project for the new atrium of the Opera House you “see” the presence of the hypostyle halls of Karnak, gigantic petrified reeds. Then, if you come to consider the column, you see that Palmyra is once more the model. The capital, reduced to a ripple in the upper extremity of the stalk, barely blossomed like an unripe flower, cannot but arise from what Quaroni saw and photographed in what remained of the Temple of Bel in Palmyra; at the top of the slender stems and tall columns were bronze Corinthian capitals – a precious finish – soon plundered by invaders and desert tribes. There remains, on top of those columns, only the stone core of those capitals, just animated by an undulation that seems to want to open the stem – built from the same stone – just as flower opening too soon. (I picture before me a picture of Ludovico, with a kind of windbreaker photographing – who knows who photographed him – precisely the Temple of Bel in Palmyra. And at last the sediments of the erudite architect: when you approach the architectural “Order” you first have to do with the proportions in the column (in this case the height of the shaft is twelve times the base or lower scape diameter, absolutely Hellenistic proportions and heretical if you consider the classical Ionic-Corinthian order, though still Oriental – which requires a ratio of one to ten). The Temple of Bel has perhaps even more slender proportions, but will have to be verified. Then you have to consider the intercolumniation. Here Quaroni, as a young erudite, like all Vincenzo Fasolo’s students, chose between the façade columns, a intercolumniation called Diastyle, equal to three diameters, always relative to the lower scape. But the arrangement of staggered columns hides other “internal” façades, positioned at 45 degrees with respect to the external ones. And those diagonal columnades, due to the effect of the multiplier of the square root of two, have a intercolumniation that is, with almost absolute precision, a Systyle (1/2) intercolumniation. But if you were to draw the exterior elevation in orthographic projection the apparent distance between the columns that align on the drawing, not considering their position in space, then the intercolumniation appears to be as tight as possible an extreme Pycnostyle 1/1, the classical Pycnostyle being 1/1.5). A manual proportional on the architectural Order synthesized in a compressed space.

Reasoning with the drawing, as Vincenzo Fasolo taught us to, with ancient monuments.



Fig. 1. The existing urban area of the Opera Theatre of Rome, Photomontage with Ludovico Quaroni's project for the Extension of the Opera Theatre. Digital Drawings by LVB (Lucio Valerio Barbera).



*Fig. 2. The existing urban area of the Opera Theatre of Rome.
Digital Drawings by LVB.*

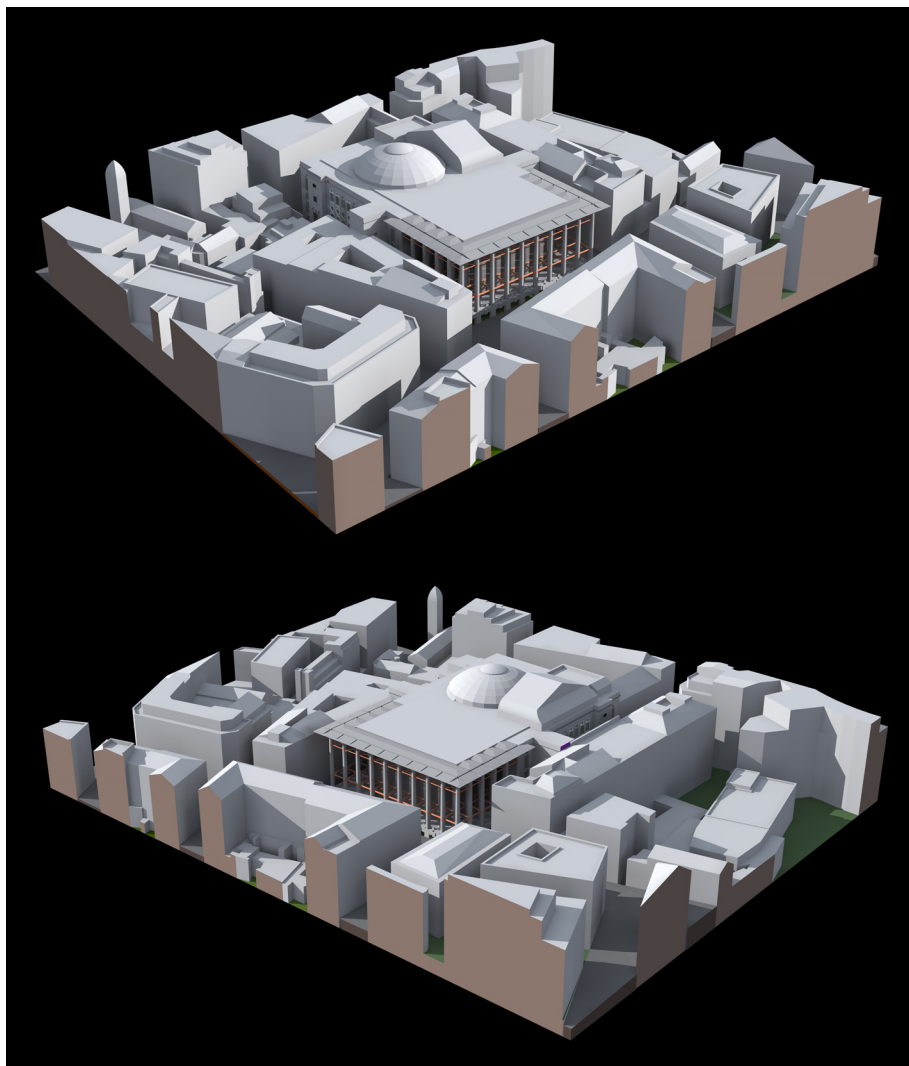


Fig. 3. The existing urban area of the Opera Theatre of Rome, with Ludovico Quaroni's project. Digital Drawings by LVB.



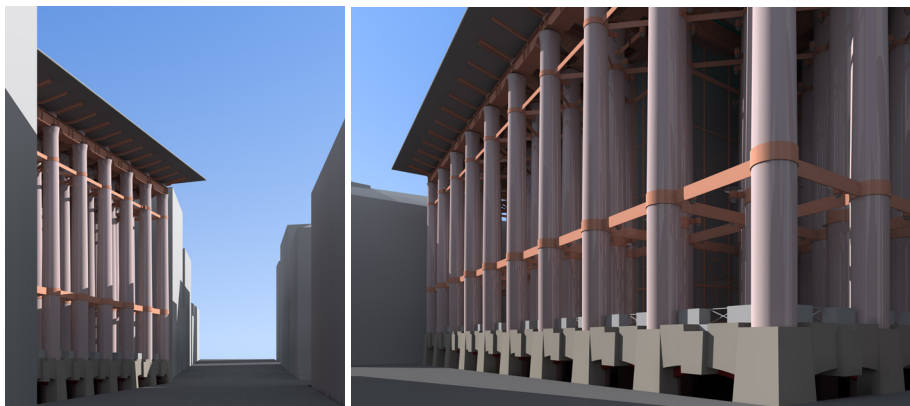
View from Piazza del Viminale. Digital Drawings by LVB.



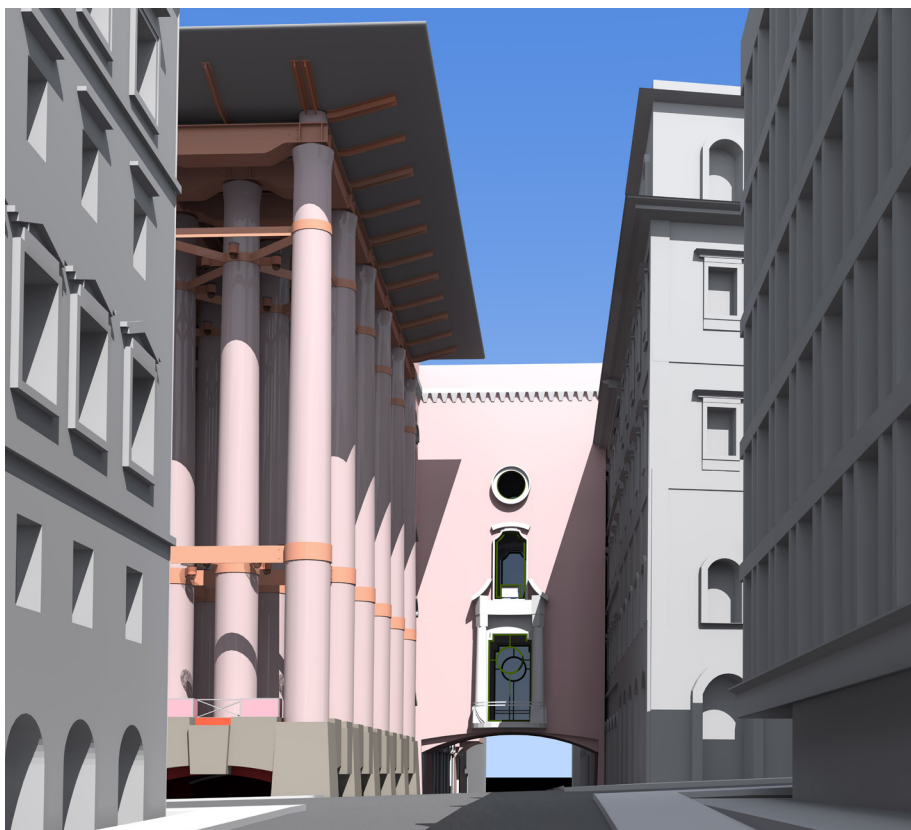
View from Piazza dei Cinquecento. Digital Drawings by LVB.



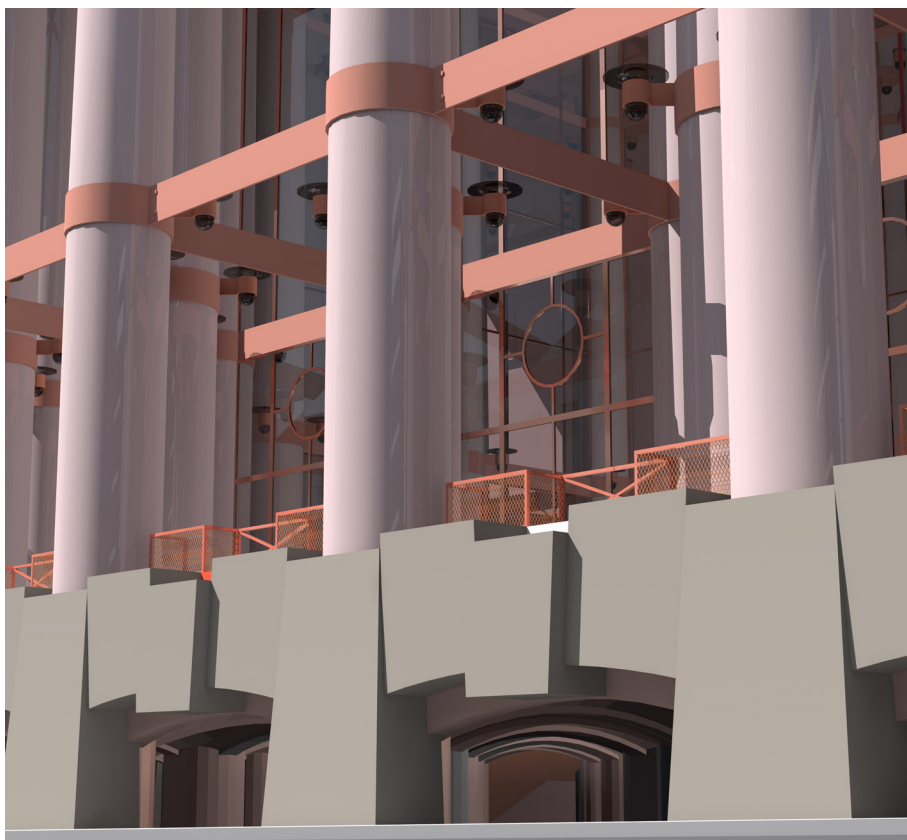
View from the Viminale. Digital Drawings by LVB.



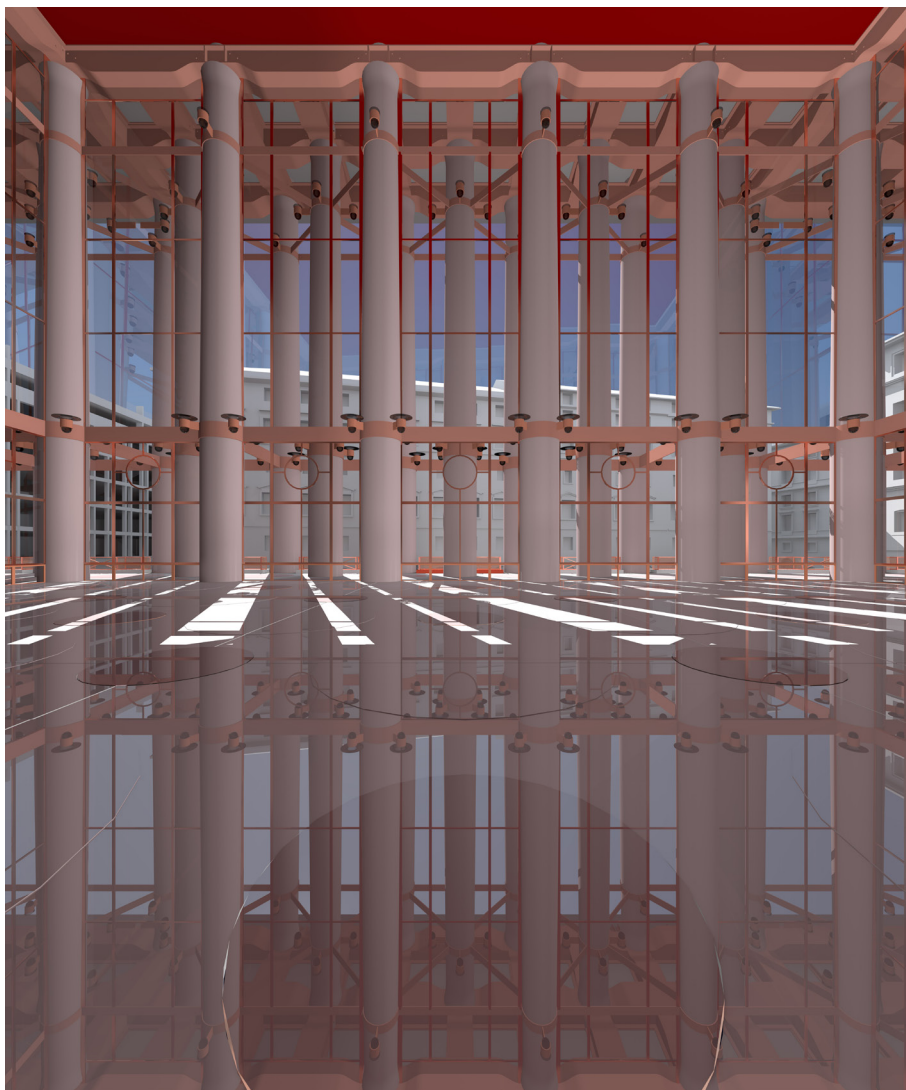
View from the road. Digital Drawings by LVB.



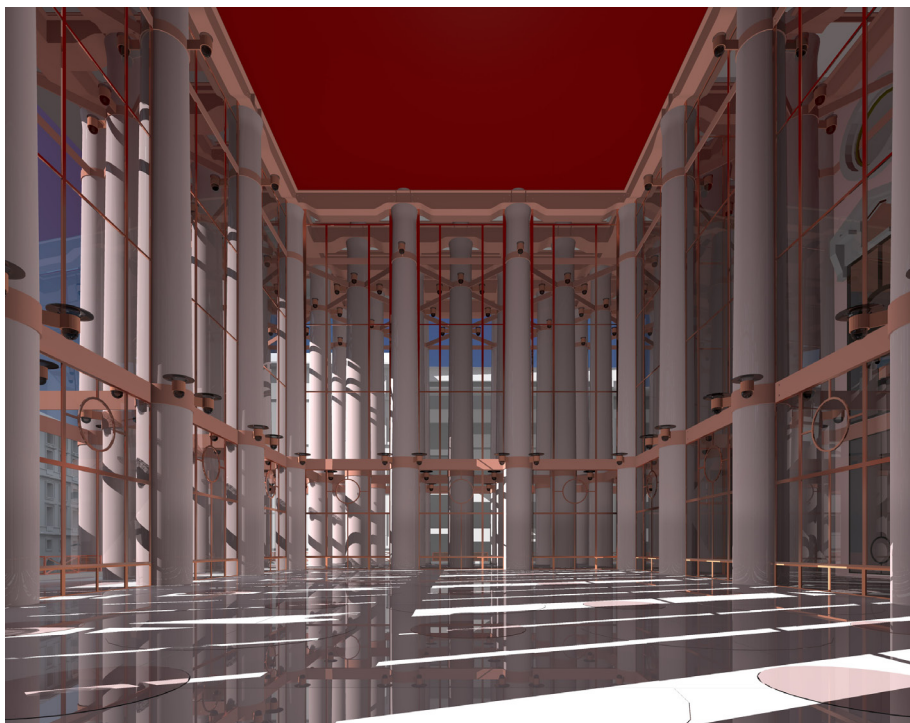
View from Via Firenze. Digital Drawings by LVB.



Basement detail. Digital Drawings by LVB.



Internal Hall. Digital Drawings by LVB.



Internal Hall. Digital Drawings by LVB.